

**THE “AVANT-GARDE” THEOLOGY  
OF GEORGE TYRRELL**

**Its Philosophical Roots Changed My  
Theological Thinking**

**BY**

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## **THE “AVANT-GARDE” THEOLOGY OF GEORGE TYRRELL**

### **Its Philosophical Roots Changed My Theological Thinking**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

My contention for many years has been that theological problems are first, and principally philosophical problems and need to be addressed as such. I began forming this view during my undergraduate years when I studied philosophy and was introduced to the theological perspective of George Tyrrell (1861–1909). Further, the philosophical perspective of one of my professors at St Michael’s College, University of Toronto, Leslie Dewart (1922–2009); contributed significantly to the formation of my convictions. Dewart’s understanding of “dehellenization,” a philosophical concept which is not to be confused with the negative concept of “unhellenization,” provided an intellectual opportunity for fresh reflection on my inherited classical understanding which was presenting problems for me. Through an examination and review of their writings, I connected the thought of George Tyrrell and Leslie Dewart. I then contrasted their thoughts with my classical understanding. I continue these efforts which disclose fresh insights in philosophical and theological thought. I do this to aid the quest of the contemporary seeker of wisdom and I leave it to the reader to decide whether or not my reflections have clarified the issues or clouded them.

It is unfortunate that, at this time in the development of religious ideas in the Western context, the place of philosophy in

relation to theology seems to have been usurped to a great extent by sociology and psychology. And I am sure that contemporary theologians are the poorer for it. That having been said, it is my hope that those readers who may not be philosophically inclined, but favour sociology and psychology, will uncover insights not previously realized, should they persevere with this book. First, however, I make a brief remark about the “scientific philosophy” that is endorsed in this book. To my mind, science is not to be confused with technology, nor philosophy. I hold that a scientific philosophy is a reasoned philosophy, but one that is not necessarily rooted in Greek classical thought. A scientific philosophy may be contrasted to a scholastic philosophy which I find wanting in its ability to credibly support a contemporary theology.

Many contemporary Western theologians are in the process of rethinking the role of theology in the public sphere and its subsequent influence in secular society. In the public sphere of secular society, where religious and spiritual ideas are often perceived as needless in a secular society, although they may be accepted privately as necessary, theological thinking is able to serve as a means for the proper integration of religious and spiritual ideas into the public sphere, without offence to its secular status. Admittedly, theological thinking, when aberrant, can serve as cause for division, fragmentation and disintegration within a society, thus giving offence to believer and non-believer alike. Today, in the Western world, a shift is taking place from the old style competitive theological polemics to a new style of cooperative ecumenical cooperation. This change in thinking is also happening on a global scale and in various non-Western cultures. Such change is reflected in that conventional theology, supported by classical philosophy, is shifting to discursive theology, supported by phenomenological philosophy. Further, contemporary theologians are seeking to make sense of the personal, but not necessarily private, experience of the believer. Making sense of the believer’s experience is often expressed in narrative terms, that is, through the telling of one’s personal story of belief or faith commitment. And many theologians have their own story to tell, including the convert George Tyrrell.



In his day, and within his particular intellectual climate, George Tyrrell attempted to understand the human narrative through his own story of the experience and understanding of revelation. Being a theologian his preoccupation with revelation and the religious narrative became a primary focus in his life. His theological legacy has its roots in the Roman Catholic theological views that were in vogue in the early 20th century. Tyrrell's way of thinking reflects an early ecumenical discursive model of theologizing rather than the conventional polemical model of theologizing current at the time. It is in this discursive model of theologizing, I suggest, that one finds Tyrrell's creative and insightful contribution to the understanding of his faith. Further, his creative and insight contributions may enlighten the faith of others.

This book is intended to draw the reader's attention to the fact that many creative and insightful contributions from theologians are often quoted and discussed by academics and others. These critics truly believe they have understood and correctly expounded the ideas of such insightful and innovative thinkers. And in most cases, they probably have done so, but not always. To my mind, George Tyrrell's story of creative and innovative theologizing is a case in point. The appreciation of his style of creative and innovative thinking is not as well established as it could be among those seeking religious enlightenment. The majority of academics discuss Tyrrell from an historical perspective within the (so-called) Modernist Crisis in the Roman Catholic Church. The extensive bibliographies in M. J. Weaver (1981) and D. Wells (1981) support this observation.<sup>1</sup> However, David Schultenover (1981) focuses on a different historical understanding than that of the conventional one. Schultenover writes of Tyrrell's way of thinking that

its genre is intellectual history as distinguished from institutional history...[and] it aims to describe not the "modernist movement" but the intellectual development of a major contributor to the "movement" by focusing on the man as the key to his thought.<sup>2</sup>

From Schultenover's perspective, then, I focus on Tyrrell's intellectual development as expressed in the Prefaces of his books.

In the Preface of a book an author often *says what he said he said* in developing the main thrust of the argument. Through a critical reading of the Preface, readers can encounter that personality whose ideas they may come to appreciate and whose influence they respect.

Therefore, to my mind readers can discover Tyrrell's intellectually meditative character by reading the Prefaces of his books. So, after a brief outline of his books expressed in the Prefaces, I offer a personal commentary as to the affect his writings have had on my thinking. Prior to that however, a brief synopsis of the particular intellectual climate of Tyrrell's day will help in appreciating the context which formed his particular meditative character.

### Particular Intellectual Influences In George Tyrrell's Life

Tyrrell lived “at a time when religion seemed fated to be submerged and undermined by the vast torrent of secular knowledge that was sweeping over the intellectual world.”<sup>3</sup> This torrent of secular knowledge threatened to discount the intellectual meditative approach to religious experience. This threat was common to the intellectual worlds of the British Isles and the Continent. David Wells notes that Tyrrell displayed in his writings an Irish heart but he had a German mind which characterized him as straddling both worlds. Mary Green suggests that in Tyrrell's day “Catholic religious thought had not kept pace with English religious thought in general, whether sound or poor, nor with Catholic and general religious thought in most countries on the Continent.”<sup>4</sup> Of German intellectual meditative thinking, which influenced Tyrrell somewhat, Joseph Gostwick notes that it had as its source earnest religious feelings which endeavoured to attain a unity of thought that could never be the result of knowledge founded on logical understanding alone. An earlier development in intellectual meditative thinking that Gostwick had observed, was that “the ‘rights’ of intuition and immediate feeling – these rights so long suppressed under the tyranny of logic – were now allowed to be as valid as the conclusions of reasoning processes.”<sup>5</sup> This

validation nourished Tyrrell's intellectually meditative character. And, "The Programme of Modernism," initiated by the encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* of Pius X, provided a focus for Tyrrell's provocative thinking.

The philosophical system known as Scholasticism is a product of its own age and time. Tyrrell recognized that the synthesis it provided no longer met the needs of the modern and scientific age. He probed into religious experience and, with the aid of scientific thinking, desired to express his intellectual meditative understanding in a new frame of reference. In Leslie Lilley's words Tyrrell could "no longer accept a demonstration of God supported by those 'idols of the tribe' – the Aristotelian conceptions of motion, of causality, of contingency, of finality."<sup>6</sup> Percy Gardner suggests that some knowledge of Hegel's dialectical philosophy would help in understanding the context of Tyrrell's thinking. Gardner quotes Tyrrell as saying, "The process through which I have reached my present position will appear as a wavering, rather than a straight line, a result that should facilitate the critic's task."<sup>7</sup> As well, Bernard Reardon acknowledges Hegel's influence on Tyrrell's thought.<sup>8</sup> A contemporary of Tyrrell, Hakluyt Egerton, (pseudonym for Arthur Boutwood), alludes to the meditative aspect of Tyrrell's thinking. When Tyrrell speaks of "Divine Immanence," Egerton does not believe that Tyrrell means Pantheism, the doctrine that God is the substance of all finite particulars. Rather, Egerton writes, "Undoubtedly Father Tyrrell believes that God is *in* man – although by way of mere indwelling, or as a part of man's composite nature, is not clear [author's italics]."<sup>9</sup> Egerton also notes that when Tyrrell distinguishes an ordinary experience of religion from an experience of revelation he does not refer to the objective source of the experience but refers to the experience itself by a description of its 'subjective' character, that is, to its character as a psychological happening. According to Maude Petre, in a lecture entitled, "Revelation and Experience," Tyrrell wrote a response to Egerton in which he sets forth this distinction: "Faith and knowledge cannot be confronted, because their realms are not the same."<sup>10</sup>

These, then, are the particular intellectual influences in and through which Tyrrell thought and wrote and which shaped his character. They also gave rise to a distinctive approach to theology which is evident in his thinking.

I now turn to the Prefaces themselves.

Illustration 1

George Tyrrell



## PREFACES

In the Introduction to her book, *Letters from a "Modernist,"* Mary Jo Weaver offers advice on how to approach Tyrrell's letters. She encourages the reader to overcome the temptation to follow theories about Tyrrell by suggesting that "we ought to search Tyrrell himself for an understanding."<sup>11</sup> I agree with her advice. Through the Prefaces and Introductions to his books, considered chronologically, I search Tyrrell's thought to understand his meditative and contemplative character from which originated his creative and insightful thinking which in turn changed my theological point of view.

### *Nova et Vetera: Informal Meditations*

Publication date: 1900

The Preface to this book was written in 1897. Tyrrell presents these meditations informally and leaves the reader to supply any practical applications deemed necessary. The wisdom which arises within meditation is often hidden from the clever and prudent and revealed to little ones. Such wisdom "does not leave them as it finds them in their ignorance and littleness" but rather gives them understanding, he says. In Maude Petre's assessment of this book she writes:

The influence of this book can best be understood through a knowledge of the class of mind and soul to which it was primarily addressed. It was not written (or preached) mainly for the outside world; but rather for Catholics, and for Catholics earnest in the spiritual life. Many such had been trained to accept as inevitable a certain systematised form of prayer...and to many silent suffers in convents, but not convents only, the informal meditations of 'Nova et Vetera' came as a breath of fresh air into a close room.<sup>12</sup>

These meditations are not presented in any particular order since Tyrrell saw no specific advantage to be gained by logical classification. He records them as they occurred from time to time,

spontaneously and unsought for, and in no way as parts of a whole. He cautions the reader to be aware of the way understanding is expressed by those within the Church and those outside the Church. The intent may not be the same even though the vocabulary is identical. Despite the human emphasis in these meditations, Tyrrell assures his readers that “no one will be likely to find fault with them as neglecting to give due emphasis to the Divinity of our Saviour and to the mystical aspect of Catholic Christianity.” He concludes the Preface by stating that the purpose of the book is to start the spiritual stream running where it has gone dry.

### *A Reflective Commentary*

A phenomenological philosophy discloses the practical, or ethical understanding of the presence of God in one’s experience, that is, phenomenological philosophy acts as a meditative philosophy. It is not how accurately we understand our meditations but, rather, how authentically we interpret them in practice. Such practical, or ethical, interpretation must be made in the context of the philosophical transitions currently taking place in Western culture and society. In Tyrrell’s way of thinking we can see the beginnings of a phenomenological philosophy, albeit, not fully understood, or known, even to Tyrrell himself. I realize also that not all scholars accept the phenomenological philosophical method as one that clarifies. To some scholars the method obscures more than clarifies.

Theologians, who undertake a habit of meditation, come to understand that there is a unity composed of the meditating subject and the other, either an object, or another meditating subject. That is, their understanding recognizes the unity of the one meditating (the subject) with another (the object). In practice, meditation is still often plagued by scholasticism which introduced dichotomous thinking into the practice of meditation. Like many theologians today, Tyrrell began searching for new and meaningful ways to interpret his, and other’s religious experience through meditating on God, as revealed in Christ. Meditation, within Western religious

experience, is not uniformly interpreted as Tyrrell noted in his writings.

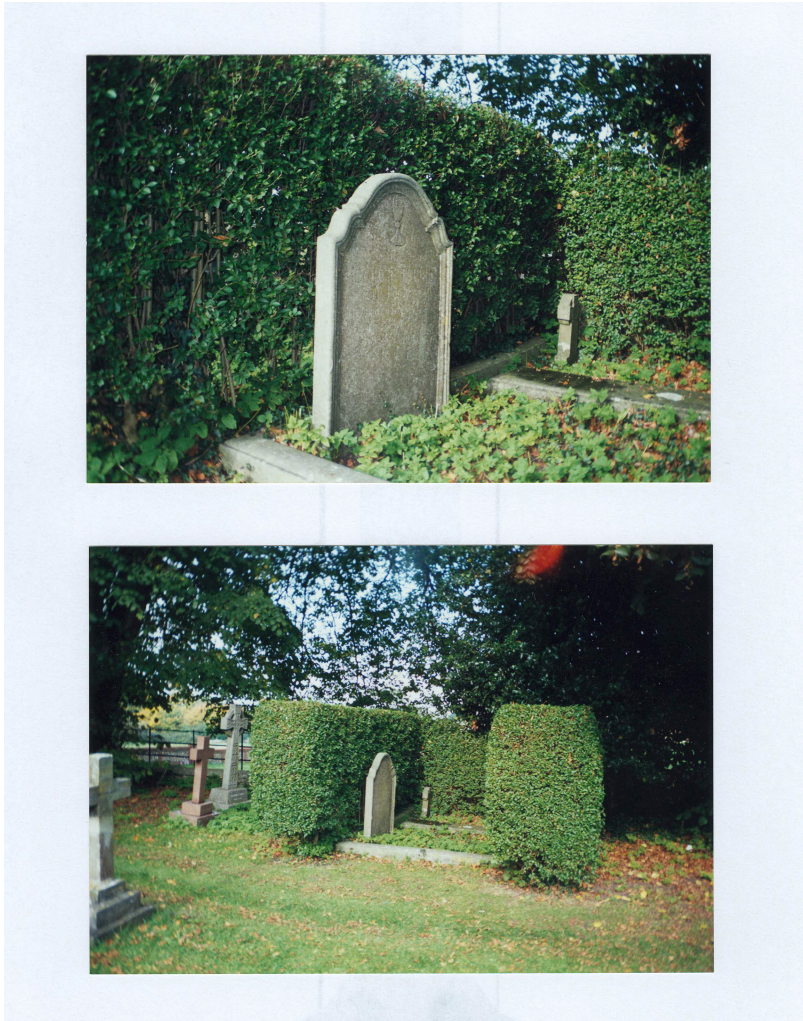
These various existential interpretations arising out of meditative contemplation may be presented phenomenologically. A phenomenological presentation is preferred because the classical theological presentation is decreasingly viable, thus less useful as Western culture becomes increasingly dehelleneized. That is to say, Western culture is increasingly independent of ancient Greek philosophical concepts. The defects of scholasticism, as Tyrrell came to understand, are the defects of its time and of the philosophical language of the day. Even a revised form of scholasticism, were such a perspective possible, could not construct the equivalent of a phenomenological interpretation of experience. A phenomenological interpretation of the meditative experience is a non-dichotomous understanding of how we conceive ourselves in the world. On the contrary, classical speculative interpretation introduces a dichotomous understanding.

A phenomenological meditation attempts to understand the existential context and develops a set of intersubjective norms and values. Tyrrell saw this clearly and called upon the reader of *Meditations* to supply practical applications of his or her insight accordingly. In the contemporary Western context, formal investigative theology is changing as Tyrrell had suggested. That is to say, religious institutions and customs are no longer perceived as given from on high as once was the case. Institutions and customs arise from experience, that is, they are not exclusively hereditary. As well, the number of theologians accepting that no one force external to experience determines the affairs in this life, is increasing. The philosophical problem is that theologians of the classical school cannot accommodate the transcendent within the immanent without being accused of being pantheistic.

Any philosophy can provide some degree of satisfaction in religious interpretation and understanding. However, Tyrrell's writings hint at a preference for the phenomenological understanding that was beginning at the turn of the century and which continues to gain acceptance in the West. In short, a result is that many contemporary theologians realize that human

understanding, arising from meditation, takes place in an existential unity of culture and society, and not within a theoretical dichotomy of culture and society.

Illustration 2



Tyrrell's grave, Parish Churchyard, Storrington, as photographed by the author in 2000



***External Religion: Its Use and Abuse***

Publication date: 1901

In this book, Tyrrell directs his lectures towards practice rather than speculation. He acknowledges that the Catholic and Protestant religion are animated by the same spirit that characterizes the whole of religious experience. Practice is to be preferred to theory in pastoral interpretation. This is so since there is potential for abuse in addressing controversial issues when individuals theoretically “first fix their beliefs, and then fabricate reasons in support of them.” By practising one’s beliefs one achieves a better understanding than by speculating about them. We are reminded that religion is an experiential interpretation of our in-born instincts and appetites, originally known unconsciously, but which are brought to our consciousness by Christ. In this book Tyrrell is writing with the British public in mind and his intent is to “let Truth appear, and then bid men, ‘Come and see!’ And of these, some will remain and some will go away, according to the power of seeing they bring with them.” Whatever manner an individual uses to apprehend the truth that same manner must be susceptible to the understanding of others.

*A Reflective Commentary*

Natural theistic theology, as a discipline in its own right, leading to the practice of religion, lies outside the Catholic religious tradition. This is so since Catholic theologians regard natural theistic theology more as a philosophy than a theology. In fact, some theologians have never considered that natural theology had a proper responsibility to interpret revelation. Natural theology, as epistemology, is the philosopher’s proper way of inquiring into created knowledge, not revelation. Natural theistic theology operates outside revelation, that is, within the created order and interpreting the created order. The *sensus fidelium*, that is, the lived sense of the faithful, is concerned with the Church’s revealed life. Theologians are required to interpret life revealed

within the *sensus fidelium*. Yet, even in serving in this role theologians are not central to the church’s spiritual life. However, they are essential to the church’s development of doctrine. In short, the Church could get along without theologians, but it could not get along without the *sensus fidelium*; the *sensus fidelium* being an expression of the lived faith, or the practice of the faith in the presence of the Holy Spirit. Two factors are required for the *sensus fidelium* to develop properly; one, the engagement of theologians themselves and two, the Magisterium, that is, the collective teaching authority of the Church. Together they are able to counter any abuse of religion.

***The Faith of the Millions (First Series Chapters I – XII; Second Series Chapters XIII – XXII)***

Publication date: 1902

In the Preface to this book of meditations Tyrrell acknowledges the difference in expression between English and Continental Catholicism. Further, he acknowledges that these meditations may also be understood from a different theological perspective by English and Continental readers. However, what English and Continental Catholicism share in common is that “religion must not only satisfy and equal [felt needs], but must transcend and promise to expand indefinitely man’s higher spiritual capacities.” Through interpreting Christ’s teachings in this collection of meditations Tyrrell has come to realize that ignorance is less an obstacle to enlightened understanding than false learning and mental deficiencies are obstacles to enlightened understanding. Regarding the faith (of the millions), his understanding is that Christianity is not added to ‘complete’ human nature rather Christianity is inherent in human nature.

*A Reflective Commentary*

Within phenomenological understanding something other than mere intellectual change occurs. An essential change occurs. With phenomenological understanding there is a re-structuring in the approach to understanding the relationship between subject and object. In phenomenological understanding the object of consciousness is not the Platonic ideal of theoretical understanding. Rather, the object of consciousness is the recognition of intentionality, that is, subjective meaning. This subjective meaning does not depend upon external norms that present being or essence. Humans need not express their relationship with each other theoretically. This relation may be expressed phenomenologically that is, existentially through a process of differentiation within an experienced unity. In short, one

may argue that the difference of expression is that of English and Continental philosophers.

Phenomenological understanding, which characterizes Continental philosophers, is an act of self-awareness or consciousness conditioned by a particular culture and society. But no one particular expression of culture or a particular form of society is necessarily required to bring about a self-conscious understanding. In Western European theological interpretation Protestants generally accepted German philosophy, that is to say, philosophical positions that relied on Kant and Hegel; and Catholics, on the other hand, accepted the Latin or classical tradition of philosophy. The Roman Catholic acceptance of individual understanding of religious experience is reflected in the German approach. Given the contemporary interest in the individual, phenomenological philosophy has the potential to disclose the self-revelation, or the knowledge of subjects, such as ourselves. In that disclosure we meet someone similar to ourselves.

A phenomenological understanding reflects a dynamic intersubjectivity. Such intersubjectivity brings about a self-transformation in our understanding of religion. But, it must be recalled that this self-transformation is not the experience of *metánoia* by which one person changes to another's way of thinking, or acting. *Metánoia* must be willfully sustained or else the individual risks a relapse to former ways. An act of religious self-transformation is not the accommodation of one's will to that of another. Rather, it is an act of adjustment of relationships between knower and known. Self-transformation arises from experience and insight and not from theory. It is almost a truism of religious belief that when old gods die people do not generally turn to atheism. New gods are invented. However, they do not always prove satisfactory.

What may prove satisfactory is the acceptance of a phenomenological philosophy in place of a classical one, which leads to new creative insights and relationships. We must create new patterns of thought to meet the challenge of our present experience. In short, Continental philosophy may displace the dominant English philosophy in Western religious interpretation.

History shows that controversial issues in religion, which were introduced by the new scientific knowledge of the late 19th and early 20th centuries into the American Church, were discussed at the pastoral or practical level. However, the same controversial issues, characterized by the Modernist Movement on the Continent and England, were contested at the level of philosophical and theoretical argument. The Continental and the English philosophers could not understand the non-metaphysical or practical language of the North American philosophers and theologians. Thus, they tended to look upon American thought as somewhat heretical. This view created a dichotomy between North American and Continental and English philosophical thought. It was the case in England and the Continent that liberal Catholics attempted to integrate the new scientific knowledge within the teaching authority of the Church. That is to say that the Modernists, for their part, attempted to reconcile the conflict between the Church and the new scientific knowledge by up-dating the meaning of doctrine, dogma and Church authority.

For the French and Italian Modernists theological study was a natural activity that included a life of prayer. Many Modernist theologians accepted that a saintly life replaced the scholastic philosophical understanding of doctrine and dogma as the proper interpreter of revelation. As George Tyrrell reminds us elsewhere, "Theology is not the product of the spiritual life of the faithful, but of the intellectual life of the schools."<sup>13</sup> In the time of Tyrrell there was a trend away from professional theologians serving the doctrinal and dogmatic needs of the Church. The new trend was to engage in a scientific religious philosophy and to develop a methodology to serve the existential needs of the individual in community. The trend was minimally successful but classical philosophy, which is rooted in scholasticism, has remained to a large degree the choice of the institutional church but not necessarily the choice of the *sensus fidelium*.

Thus, the contemporary theologian must remain in close contact with the hopes and the anguish of his or her own age and employ that philosophy most suitable to the times and the experience of believers. It is highly doubtful that scholasticism

remains the most suitable philosophy for the majority of the faithful. Only by remaining in close contact with the changing Christian tradition can the theologian speak to the faithful in a meaningful way. Today, there is need to establish a philosophy that will be suitable to address the expression of meaning arising from humanity-as-subject within creation, and not humanity-as-object of creation. That is to say that, humanity is not merely part of creation but humanity is a co-creator.

***The Church and the Future***

Publication date: 1903

‘In my own inward history this book ends a painful process of necessary readjustment, and I feel as one who, after much uncertainty, has at last chosen a path that is clear, however difficult and uninviting in many ways.’ Thus Father Tyrrell wrote to a friend on June 27th, 1903, in regard to *The Church and the Future*, which he had printed privately under the pseudonym Hilaire Bourdon, and which was being circulated with great reserve and discretion. There was, during his literary career, a short period during which it was necessary that his advice to those in need should be anonymous or pseudonymous.

Maude Petre wrote these words in the Introduction to the 1910 edition of this book. Further, in her *Autobiography and Life of George Tyrrell*, she reproduces a letter Tyrrell wrote to Baron von Hügel in 1903 about a book he intended to call, *Catholicism Revisited*.<sup>14</sup> Tyrrell wrote:

I regard the ‘Catholicising of Christianity’ as a *per se* result of the Spirit of Christ, and not as a perversion or accident; but I perceive in that ‘Catholicising’ process (as in the scriptures) a divine and a human, an inspired and an uninspired element; and I apply the *quod semper*, etc. test in a *practical* way *sc*, beliefs and institutions which are proved, experimentally, to foster the Christian spirit, *ipso facto*, are proved to be true to that spirit. And by the Christian spirit I mean that spirit which spoke from the beginning in the prophets and men of faith, and found its most docile organ in Christ, and which still speaks in the corporate life of the Church, so far as holiness is found there, *i.e.*, I make the Saints and not the theologians the teachers of Christianity. The Spirit of Christ rather than Christ Himself is the creator of the Church – or rather of the whole organism of the pre- and post-Christian Church

of which Christ is the bond, and of which no part, not even Christ, exhausts the possibilities.

*A Reflective Commentary*

In the contemporary religious climate, I detect a renewed interest in the individual as a person as the common subject of theology and of psychology. Faith arises within the innate striving for the need of humanitarian community feeling. By that I mean community feeling in Alfred Adler’s sense of *Gemeinschaftsgefuehl*. Adler’s psychological concept appropriate for theology, as I have written elsewhere.<sup>15</sup> Tyrrell’s psychology reveals a “growth model” of personal development in contrast to a model of clinical pathological psychology which is designed to help the individual cope successfully with life. Crises, in the philosophical sense, may be addressed through Adler’s community feeling since they present a new set of problems and possibilities for personal growth outside the clinical context.

Diramuid O’Murchu, a noted Catholic author in psychology, seems to have had a similar experience to Tyrrell. He writes: “My own faith journey includes many transitions in which new ways of understanding superseded those which previously seemed unalterable or, according to official teaching, could never change and therefore should never be abandoned.”<sup>16</sup> My experience has shown that the outcome of theistic theological reflection has an influence on the moral and social life of individuals in community. Further, history shows us that all substantial deepening of theistic theological understanding has been the work not of ecclesiastical officials, but of faithful individuals whose proper role, sometimes in opposition to ecclesiastical officials was to correct and modify the formal teaching of the Church. This modifying role of the faithful is in keeping with Auguste Sabatier’s thinking whose understanding is that it is not enough that theology makes clear the impotence of the old forms of religion; theology’s task is to create new forms for itself, he reminds his readers in his *Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit*.



Theistic theology and revelation act and react upon each other. Within this interaction, my experience has been that theistic theological interpretation develops within my intellectual understanding, whereas, revelation unfolds within my conscious experience. Growth and development occur naturally within the reaction of theology and revelation. The individual is not a static being. The believer experiences life, spiritually and dynamically, in a bodily incarnation and not merely as a disembodied spirit. This dynamic incarnation enables the believer to overcome obstacles and to achieve that which is good as a goal in life.

Further, this incarnation affects health and well-being of the body. Interestingly, the non-believer will also lay claim in this life to a power that affects health and well-being of the body. In that case, however, the power of movement is often understood as a psychic activity rather than a spiritual activity. But this is not what Tyrrell has in mind.

Religious individuals understand themselves as bearers of a moral will to be exercised within the community. The meaning they give to life varies from individual to individual. Meaning can arise from a healthy or unhealthy life-style. One's health, or its absence, is recognized from the individual's attitude to life. In a healthy individual meaning cannot be private but it is personal. As such, it must be communal. In fact, private meaning is no meaning at all. In this regard, although virtue is experienced personally it is, in fact, meaning for the community. The degree to which the community can share in the experience of each member establishes the degree of unity and health of the community and conversely the individual. In all humanistic religions we see such a phenomenon.

But what to make of the difficult path of life for the Church as Tyrrell mentioned? Striving for a better life is a conscious activity moving towards a goal, one that we know and one that we hope for. Its path is composed of pain and sorrow; relief and joy. The ability to revise one's goal as new data becomes available is an indication that our chosen path is becoming clearer, that is to say our path is open, to the transcendent, not closed. The transcendent is that element of the Catholicizing process that moves the person

away from isolated independence to a spiritually understood interdependence between one subject and another, between God and the Church. Humans, who make up the Church, are connected to someone beyond themselves and recognize this spiritual element in their lives.

Religious belief is tied to spirituality and may be understood as a sociological expression of the faith experience. We cannot separate religious belief from its social expression since every existential human expression has a sociological and psychological context through which it is both received and offered. In Christianity the specific sociological entity that mediates the faith has a particular name, the *ecclesia*. Exploring all the various understandings of the *ecclesia* has become a specialized discipline within theology – ecclesiology, that is, the study of the church. Differing interpretations of the scriptural texts and the political, philosophical, charismatic, and reform movements all have contributed to the Christian understanding of the *ecclesia*. From the phenomenological perspective, the *ecclesia* is not an ideology imposed on a group. Rather, the *ecclesia* is disclosed through the particularities of the group’s self-understanding of its own historical culture, tradition, and rites. There is a plurality of expression of the *ecclesia* corresponding to the plurality of cultures and people within the Church of Christ. This plurality is not a problematic, but it is a “sign of the times.” Debates abound in ecclesiology, while necessary and legitimate they are often apologetic in character rather than investigative of religious belief. In surveying the literature associated with religious belief, one very rarely comes across any apologetics for the justification of the various ecclesiologies that are extant within Christianity. Arguably, the only ecclesiology that religious belief presupposes is a Pauline ecclesiology. This notion of the Church, being a universal community of spirit-filled people renewed in mind and transcending national, ethnic and gender categorization, had its genesis in the writings of St Paul.

Paul’s vision for the *ecclesia* is a universal and Christological solidarity in which there is no longer any opposition between male and female, Jew and Greek, slave and free (cf. Galatians 3:28). As

a consequence of his conversion and personal interpretations of Christ's mission, Paul read very different meanings into the Torah scriptures and therefore used scripture in surprising and subversive ways to argue for a new vision of the church. I direct the reader to the seminal work, *The Apostle Paul: His Gospel before the Gospels*, by Daniel J. Theron, to find a fresh approach to the life and writings of St Paul which are pivotal in understanding the genesis of the Church in the contemporary world.<sup>17</sup>

The grafting of the Gentiles onto the root of Israel required Paul to execute a bold and unorthodox re-reading of scripture texts. For example, Paul subverts the story of Hagar, Sarah and their sons (Galatians 4:21-31) by interpreting it to mean that the uncircumcised are the children of the promise. Such an inclusion was not without controversy. One of the earliest ethical dilemmas recorded in the New Testament concerned the thorny issue of circumcision. The Council of Jerusalem, (as reported in Acts and Galatians), eventually exempted Gentile Christians from circumcision and full observance of the Torah. This was the new wine requiring new wineskins. This message has defined the church ever since.

Most theologians think *in medio ecclesia*, that is, within the believing community. In the context of Roman Catholic Modernism of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the theologian George Tyrrell exposed unconscious understandings of power that wrongly identified the medieval juridical institution with the experience of the faithful and the realization of the church. My reason for appealing to Tyrrell's, *The Church and the Future*, is that his experience is sufficiently contemporary to be useful yet his ideas have been tested by history. Pre-modern society was not oriented to professionalism but to authoritarianism. Pyramidal order was authoritarianism's form of organization, hierarchically structured for absolute rule and governance. Modern society and, to a degree, modern religious orientation are oriented toward professionalism. Bureaucratic rationalism is an organizational form democratically structured for management and governance.

Postmodern organization is different however, in that it is oriented to the principle of creativity. Legitimate creative

organization comes primarily from that charism which is at once social and spiritual thus providing the context for Christian theologians to think *in medio ecclesia*. For any serious dialogue to bear fruit, it should be acknowledged that our Western philosophical tools such as classical Thomism are ill-equipped to serve as an *ancilla theologiae* for a new theology, which must stress personal experience and qualitative understanding. Two postmodern academic developments closely allied are critical in giving some context to the current theological tensions and philosophical issues today. The first is a recognition that the period of medieval Christendom has come to a close, having left in its wake a material secularism that is a constituent part of contemporary Western culture. The other is the psychological conception of the person that has developed, as medieval Christendom ended, in place of the philosophical scholastic understanding.

The very foundation of humanism, based on a pre-modern classical anthropology, is being questioned in postmodern thinking. What the most appropriate response is to this questioning presents itself as the theological question of our time. If speaking of God really means that we are at the same time saying something meaningful about ourselves, then talking about God in categories that belong to an earlier stage of humanity's experience simply cannot be satisfactory. One of the criticisms of modernity is that it sets up a false confidence in rationality and science. Within a false confidence, rationality and science are understood as being able to convey the totality of existential experience given their ability to categorize. In contrast, plurality, subjectivity and intersubjectivity are considered to convey authentically, the existential experience in our contemporary culture. Postmodern understanding moves us away from an ontology that would put us in contact with an abstract entity derived from theoretical deduction. Postmodern understanding takes us toward an active engagement with life itself which will determine the Church of the future. The Church of the future, as an institution, ought not to impose any specific philosophical system that might frustrate any broad notion of Catholicity.

In this commentary, I distinguish between speculative language and qualitative language. Speculative language belongs to classical philosophy, whereas qualitative language belongs to phenomenological philosophy. I suggest that the suffixes “-ism” and “-ity,” characterize classical and phenomenological language respectively, reflect this distinction. Funk and Wagnall’s *Canadian College Dictionary* defines “-ism” as a suffix attached to nouns to mean “a distinctive theory, doctrine, or system: usually used disparagingly;” and “-ity” is a suffix attached to nouns to mean a “state, condition, or quality.” The following pairs of terms, often used in discussions in philosophy and theology, illustrate this distinction further: spiritualism vs. spirituality, materialism vs. materiality, personalism vs. personality, humanism vs. humanity, nationalism vs. nationality, historicism vs. historicity, Catholicism vs. Catholicity, individualism vs. individuality, modernism vs. modernity, dualism vs. duality, rationalism vs. rationality, moralism vs. morality, and Deism vs. Deity. Usually, words ending in “-ity” reflect a phenomenological language, whereas words ending in “-ism” reflect a classical language.

This book is a product of my reflection. It is not a history of religious thought. Nor is it written in the form of a traditional catechism as founded on the school of scholastic theology. Rather, it is a philosophical reflection intended to reconstruct pre-Vatican II theological ideas in light of phenomenological philosophical understanding. Although I examine issues from a Western Catholic philosophical point of view, my observations may be applied, *inter alia*, to the entire Western Christian social and pastoral tradition. My examination is undertaken from within the collective body of believers, that is, the Church. The Church must be the *locus* of my study since there is no divine guarantee attached to isolated inquiry in the Christian philosophical tradition. I do accept that there are limits to “Catholicism,” the traditional concept, but what of “Catholicity,” the phenomenological notion? It appears to me that Catholicism is limited by scholastic philosophy, whereas Catholicity is free from scholastic constraints.

The exercise of private judgment, which characterized Protestant from Catholic theologians in Pre-Vatican II times, no

longer accurately distinguishes Catholic from Protestant. The fact is that in the modern context both Protestants and Catholics exercise private judgment. As a convert to Roman Catholicism in the Victorian era, George Tyrrell noted that the Protestant believer accepts scripture as functioning as the supreme rule, whereas, the Catholic believer accepts the Church as functioning as the supreme rule. What unites their behaviour is that both Catholic and Protestant interpret these rules through an exercise of private judgment. It is to charismatic Christianity, as revealed in the New Testament, and not to the ecclesiastical institution of the time that the Protestant believer looks for the light of Christ. The Catholic believer, however, looks to a spirit-guided ecclesiastical institution, not to charismatic Christianity. Charismatic Christianity, of the type recorded in the New Testament, reflects a period of historical inspiration and enchantment. As long as conditions for inspiration and enchantment continued, as it is argued, there was no need for a formal organization that might hinder, as opposed to enable, the action of the spirit. A critical reading of the history of theology shows that scientific and historical advancement became a problem, not for the Church as is popularly supposed, but for the philosophy and the theology giving expression to revelation within the Church. Scientific and historical advancement are primarily an epistemological problem concerning philosophical and theological interpretation and only secondarily a problem concerning the faith of the members of the historical church, or, the *ecclesia*. More is said below about this distinction between the historical church and the *ecclesia*. Existential phenomenological philosophy, which has gained influence within Catholic philosophy since the Second Vatican Council, encourages historical criticism. The scriptures, as documents of revelation, are susceptible to the laws of textual criticism as is any historical document. In the case of the scriptures, textual criticism discloses the literary conventions of the era in which the scriptures were written. In this regard, George Tyrrell writes in *The Church and the Future*:

We do not ask if Socrates really said what Plato puts into his mouth; but we may rationally ask: ‘Is Plato’s Socrates the true Socrates? Similarly, may we not perhaps be

justified in asking: Did Christ do or say all that the Fourth Gospel ascribes to him?’ but only in asking: ‘Is the Johannine Christ the true Christ, a true resetting and idealisation of Christ?’

The scriptures were not written as chronological history and cannot be used as any sort of “proof-text” to establish Jesus’ divinity. In light of modern scriptural studies since 1900, I conclude, as did George Tyrrell, that the Christian scriptures by themselves are an insufficient basis for the scientific establishment of a single clear fulfilment of prophecy. Further, the New Testament has been both consciously and unconsciously doctored into an agreement with prophecy so as to bring home to the Jews an *ad hominem* argument for Christ’s Messiahship (Sagovsky, 1990). Further, referencing the Council of Florence (1431-1438), George Tyrrell noted that since then all that was taught about dogmas, sacraments and Church government from the Roman Catholic point of view was accepted as fully known to Peter and his successors. This pre-Vatican II view, which he criticized, is no longer tenable given the contemporary and ecumenical theological investigations. I reject this theological point of view, supported by the Council of Florence, and rely instead on the theological insights, typical of George Tyrrell, as I examine the move from a scholastic to a phenomenological philosophical understanding. In short, I contemplate the move towards Catholicity, characteristic of theological understanding after Vatican II, and away from Catholicism. It was evident to George Tyrrell that the historical criticism of the late 1800’s revealed that ecclesiastical government had developed *de facto* from a loose federation of organized democratic communities into a centralized and hierarchical ecclesiastical structure in which all the teaching authority was being invested in the pope. It appeared that the teaching authority would be taken away from the ecumenical councils and episcopate in which it previously resided. Tyrrell observed that the schoolmen of the day equated faith with theological orthodoxy and they assumed that Christ’s mission was primarily a theological one. These schoolmen argued that the Church must necessarily possess the same authority, which Christ possessed in settling doubts about

his teaching and miracles on earth. Ignoring biblical inspiration such a view of the Church’s authority as held by the schoolmen can only be maintained through a philosophical dialectic, (dare I say rhetoric?), and papal infallibility.

According to Tyrrell, in the Johannine and Pauline writings the first beginnings of philosophical reflection on the teaching of Christ are clearly evident. However, it is to be noted that Johannine and Pauline reflection and teaching were proper to their culture, and not to that of the Western scholastic tradition, nor to our contemporary culture. The Catholic theological system, in principle, is as old as the first epistle of St Clement, (circa 75–110), in which the Church is conceived as a divine institution. It is conceived as a corporation possessing officers whose duty is independent of their personal gifts and determined solely by an official position. From this point of view clergy are analogous to officers of the state.

That the institutional form was absolutely necessary for the saving of Christianity from speedy disintegration no one will deny; but it is in asserting the Divine origin of the Ecclesiastical Polity and of the *Civitas Dei* that Catholicism is at one with St Clement, and at variance with the critics, says Tyrrell in this book. What have the contemporary critics to say about Catholicity, not Catholicism, and the institutional form of Christianity, I ask. Given my understanding, which is patterned on the textual criticism of scripture, I suggest that the Christ would never contemplate God’s grace attaching to any form of government, ecclesiastical or state, in lieu of the person. Further, it is clear that the apostles believed that the end of the world would occur within their lifetime and made no provision for an institutional future particularity as we know and live it today.

The spirit that animates the Church today, animated the Christ. To my mind, this same spirit reveals an understanding of Catholicity, not Catholicism, as constituting the Church today. As Tyrrell expressed it; Christ and the Church are different and complementary organs of the spirit’s own expression adapted to different phases of the same movement. I suggest that Tyrrell’s thinking discloses an understanding of Catholicity, rather than that



of Catholicism, even though he writes with the classical vocabulary of the Catholicism of his day. The ecclesiastical institution is designed to perpetuate and promote, among the uninspired millions of believers, the conceptions and ideals revealed by the founder of the Christian movement, that is, Jesus of Nazareth. According to the Church's teaching authority the institution embodies a variation of the original revelation and never creates a new revelation.

A challenging philosophical variation, within contemporary theology, is the notion of *homo faber* vs. that of *homo creator*. If normative revelation ceased with the death of the last apostle, how Catholicity differs from Catholicism becomes a significant question. Catholicity is primarily a way or manner of life based on the life of Jesus of Nazareth that has been committed to the guardianship of the Church. Catholicity is not a body of doctrine imparted to the Church about Jesus of Nazareth. In short, the spirit of the Christ, not Christology, has been revealed to the Church. And the spirit of Christ is susceptible to phenomenological interpretation in the ecclesial community.

The Spirit of the Christ appropriates from a multitude of beliefs, theological, ethical, and historical, those that are most suitable for its own embodiment and adapts them to its present purposes. The Spirit of the Christ uses the knowledge at hand to develop public doctrine based on a human understanding. Given this end, then, the true teacher in the Church is the Spirit of the Christ, or the Holy Spirit, acting immediately in and through the whole body of the faithful both lay and ordained. In cooperation with the Spirit of the Christ, the teaching activity of the episcopate consists in dispensing to, and in gathering from, all the faithful. In dispensing to, and in gathering from all, the Magisterium acts with the authority of, and in the name of, the whole ecclesial community.

Regarding the Thomistic approach to theology, which is characteristic of traditional and hierarchical Christianity, Aquinas did leave a particular foundation to posterity. He left his theological *Summa* but he did not leave his inquisitive theological spirit, that is, his gifted insight into what was going on in the minds

of those around him. His liberal theological spirit, in appropriating the methods of criticism current in his day, seems to be lost to us. A theologian, such as Thomas, is one who speaks prompted by an inward spirit and is, in fact, a rarity. Any priest, or minister, can instruct us and tell us what the Church teaches and believes. In short, any priest or minister can be a catechist. In our day a sense of official instruction, which continues to dominate the institutional Church, threatens the charismatic spirit of the theologian. History and experience show that the spirit of Christ does work outside the official Church. Thus, one may be historically outside the official Constantinian Church, while not simultaneously outside the Church of Christ, which subsists in the Catholic Church. A phenomenological understanding of Catholicity, or the Spirit of Christ, discloses the theological variation of what Vatican II intended when it affirmed that the Church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church (*Lumen Gentium*, para. 8).

Within the philosophical circumstances of our time, that is, the evolutionary stage of philosophy in which we find ourselves, I examine the Church's theology in light of the fact that a Hellenized philosophy no longer satisfactorily meets the needs of Christ's faithful. I live in a new age of history as societal and cultural change continues throughout the entire world. Such societal and cultural change has philosophical and theological implications for me as one of Christ's faithful. My faith tells me that I am to be saved as an individual person and that human society is to be renewed with in this same salvific process. The divine life in me is shared with others within the Church, that is, Christ's other faithful members. In turn, the Church shares the faith with all humanity. Humanity searches for a better world but often does so without seeking a better philosophical explanation of its experience than the one it has inherited. From my experience, I know that an evolutionary concept of nature is in the process of replacing the static classical concept of nature. This presents new problems for philosophy and theology, which call for a new analysis. To my mind, the classical and historical solutions must be replaced by phenomenological philosophical solutions. Henri Bergson's (1944)

insightful notion is at work here. That is, evolution modifies and develops fully those philosophical and theological understandings which interpenetrate each other. Within society there is a sense that human beings are destined for a higher life. The destiny of a higher life, or higher purpose in life, originates in this world, not outside of this world.

Humans are at the centre and summit of that life which extends beyond the incarnated boundaries of human misery, that is, to the transcendental life. Out of the history of Israel, and here I mean the history that is understood by the German, *heilige geschichte*, or salvation history, has come the realization of the Church as theological mystery. In her incarnated historical life, the church grows into maturity and longs for a kingdom inaugurated by the mystery of the incarnation of Jesus of Nazareth. In the incarnated life, through the sacraments, the faithful are united to Christ, and to each other, within the Church. Christ established his community existentially as a society of faith, hope and charity on earth. And he did so without any historical or political governing structure. Such political and historical structures developed subsequently to his preaching. Such is the theological mystery of the kerygma of Christ. The phenomenological body of Christ and the phenomenological salvific community together constitute the mystery of the Church in one organic unity. Theologians today, then, work with the methods of philosophical phenomenology to establish the credibility of this unity for contemporary and future generations. To establish this credibility for contemporary and future generations, freedom of philosophical inquiry into the theological mystery of the ecclesia is a matter of necessity.

The Church, or better, the *ecclesia*, is composed of individuals constituting a relational bond among all the faithful. This bond is the *locus* of the divine life in the world. For the Christian, it is the spirit of the risen Christ who forms this bond and calls all the faithful to him forming a new people of God, not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit (1 Cor. 11:25). “According to the flesh” signifies the historically constituted People of God, whereas “according to the spirit” signifies a phenomenologically disclosed People of God. In other words, the *ecclesia* has evolved, and is

evolving, in our understanding from an existential historical entity in time to a phenomenological entity in consciousness. The existential mission of the *ecclesia* is primarily salvific, and secondarily, political, economic or social. The salvific mission of the *ecclesia* is not connected to any one particular culture or philosophical system. It transcends history in its phenomenological presence, yet is mysteriously incarnated in history. By its nature and mission, the church is universal in that it is not committed to any one culture or to any political, economic or social system. Hence, it can be a very close bond between the communities of peoples and nations, provided they trust the church and guarantee its true freedom to carry out its mission (Flannery, 1996). In the phenomenological understanding of the constitution of the *ecclesia*, the priesthood of the faithful, and the hierarchical priesthood are organically related, but purposively distinguishable. These priestly offices differ ontologically and each is a particular conscious phenomenon. They constitute an organic, not mechanical, unified phenomenological entity. Collectively, all Christ's faithful, lay and ordained are essentially a phenomenological universal entity when confessing matters of faith and morals. This confession is a consensus, or *sensus fidelium*, which originates in, and is maintained by, a phenomenologically understood presence of the spirit. Phenomenologically understood, then, Christ's faithful as the People of God, the *ecclesia*, transcend the historical Constantinian People of God, that is, the ecclesiastical, not ecclesial, community. Constantine, it will be remembered, was the Roman Emperor, whose Edit of Milan (313) gave legal status to the Christians of the Empire.

Within the course of my reflections, in preparing this book, major cultural changes have caused me to conceive of a new age in human history. In this new age I recognized that I myself am an agent of some of these cultural changes that affect my understanding of the *ecclesia*. The realization of this status remains problematic after Vatican II, particularly for the Catholic faithful, who continue to discern the presence of God in the changes brought about through *ressourcement* and *aggiornamento*.<sup>18</sup> One

problem arising from *ressourcement* and *aggiornamento* is the recognition of the individual in the phenomenological *ecclesia*, vis à vis the incorporation of the individual into the visible ecclesiastical corporation. This incorporation was a concern for the theologians of Vatican II, which they managed to address to varying degrees of satisfaction. The Council maintained that the individual person who does not persevere in charity is not saved, even though incorporated into the church. Such people remain indeed in the bosom of the church, but only ‘bodily’ not ‘in their hearts’ (*L.G.* para. 14. Flannery, 1996).

In most hierarchical churches, it is believed that the teaching of the bishops, under the inspiration of the spirit, governs Christ’s faithful. This teaching is realized through a three-fold relationship among the bishop, priest and deacon within God’s flock which has been committed to them by Christ. Catholicism is a readily recognizable example of this understanding of a religious corporation. Theologians subscribing to the Catholicity of the *ecclesia* understand that bishops alone are successors to the pastoral responsibilities given to the apostles. However, they share this responsibility through a delegation to the priest and deacon in a collegiate structure. Today, this structure is more adequately understood phenomenologically rather than in a Hellenized fashion. Given developments in New Testament textual criticism, contemporary Bishops have become inspired and motivated to present Christ’s teachings in a manner relevant to the needs of the times, as did the early presbyters of the Christian community. Hierarchically constituted churches, phenomenologically understood, enjoy an organic relationship among themselves, each community with its own liturgical, spiritual and theological patrimony. In a phenomenological understanding, when the Roman Pontiff makes infallible pronouncements it is not as a private person, but as one in whom the infallibility of the *ecclesia* is disclosed in a collegial manner. Therefore, such pronouncements present the deposit of the faith in such a way that no new public revelation, or addition to revelation, is requisite for salvation.

The laity, which includes those who are in a religious, or vowed, state of life, constitute a portion of the *ecclesia* and are to

be distinguished from the hierarchy. Many lay individuals seek a deeper knowledge of revelation and a deeper wisdom than they currently possess in order to be fulfilled in the *ecclesia* in the circumstances of the present day. With the hierarchy, the laity has its role to play in interpreting revelation. The laity are related to the hierarchy in an organic constitution of the *ecclesia* and collectively they constitute Christ's faithful. All Christ's faithful are called to holiness and to participate in the divine presence. Reflecting about religion, whether by hierarchy or laity, and as guided by God's presence, I agree with M. D. Chenu's description (1959). The theologian is an adult Christian who, taking cognizance of what he possesses, reflects upon it, analyses the complex content of his faith, builds it up, unifies it. As one of the new People of God my theistic theology becomes an acquired desire, a philosophical desire, for religious understanding, within my conscious movement-towards-God. In fact, I am a being destined-for-God. In this understanding my philosophical attitude, as pre-requisite, leads me to self-discovery, to seeing for myself and to doing for myself, as defined by God. Since I undertake my self-discovery within a believing Christian community I thus clarify my particular experience, as revealed to me in God's presence, through intersubjectivity, wherein I participate in God's mind and God participates in my mind. Such intersubjectivity discloses that God, as subject, is differentiated from me, another subject, as well differentiated from other faithful subjects.

As a theologian, I can never complete my interpretive task. But, in this interpretive task I need to embrace a philosophy that will be suitable to giving theological expression to the true understanding of God's revelation to the *ecclesia*. On the question of the true understanding in religion see the collection of essays by Daniel Guerrière (1990). The most appropriate philosophy for me, as I try to explicate what is known implicitly about God and revelation through my experience, is existential phenomenology. I therefore must remain in close contact with the hopes and anxieties of my own time. Only in such a context can Christian revelation speak to me in a properly meaningful way. Phenomenology makes it possible for me to reflect upon myself and revelation in a manner

that is unthinkable and thus not possible within scholasticism. There is only one activity, phenomenologically understood, which affects me and allows me to realize the true meaning of God's influence on me. That activity is love. Love allows for intersubjectivity. In short, love permits the other to be subject for me. In other words, the other, either an individual person or God, cannot be an object if loved by me. A phenomenological understanding of love, then, has a greater appropriateness for theology in the contemporary world than a philosophy of reason. A loving encounter of two human subjects effects a participation in transcendental reality, that is, in God as subject. When God-as-subject, is the other, I participate in the fullness of transcendental reality. The subjectivity which constitutes me is brought about through the divine creative love affecting in me a desire to see God. My thinking here reflects that of St Augustine. "For you have made us for yourself and our heart is restless until it rests in you."<sup>19</sup> I cannot initiate this intersubjective relationship with God. I can only respond to God's existential invitation to me. Such is the deeper wisdom arising out of revelation with which the faithful laity must be concerned with in the circumstances of our day.

In the construction of the Church of the future, the question will arise: could our present cultural ecclesial communities lose their role in society if they are constituted territorially? I suggest that the answer is, no. Multilateral communities will be constituted phenomenologically and subsequently designated by another term than multilateral. Such communities, when phenomenologically recognized, will constitute humanitarian communities which will depend, unlike the Internet, on embodied individual and collective relationships. The development of non-territorial communities suggests to me that the cultural problems of religion, language, education, administration, etc., can be resolved within an ecclesial community that eliminates the idea of nationalism, or national sovereignty. I suggest that in a new order of organic church governance, the notions of co-ordination and cooperation will replace those of a sovereign and centralized national ideology, which has become no longer useful. This is so since the ecclesial principle of subsidiarity locates the power of the decision-making

process in the hands of those affected by the decision-making process. In contrast, sovereign and centralized bureaucracies take power away from those affected by the decision-making process. To act locally and link up globally demonstrate the dynamic of an organic, non-territorial ecclesial order, that is, an order of governance, not government. Whether or not such governance is workable in all contemporary societies is an open question at this point. However, such governance seems to me more in keeping with my Christian notion of God’s kingdom that is not limited by physical territory

It is likely that in the future there will be no universal canon law to govern the Church and regulate the life of the faithful, but only regional particular canon laws. In a phenomenologically constituted community the development of canon law will be a self-regulating exercise as the law emerges from both public and personal experience through the various interpretations given by the faithful. In future canon law there will likely be minimal penal sanctions and more opportunity for remedial action. That is to say, the constitution of canon law will be such that laws will not be in external conflict with one another but, rather, be corrective of innate personal and corporate behaviour. This understanding is consonant with the modern desire to present an equality of opportunity. However, there is no guarantee of an equality of outcome.

In this commentary, I suggest that a phenomenologically understood ecclesial community reflects a new ecclesiology that is based upon the relationship within our collective experience, and not on the mere notion of territorialism. The option for the future governance of the Church I advocate, in contrast to the present traditional architectural structure, calls for a new organic ecclesiology, not merely territorially re-ordered but phenomenologically reconstituted. Such re-constitution requires, on a continual basis, a reappraisal of the development of my Christian theistic theology along with all members of the Christian community.



***Lex Orandi or Prayer and Creed***

Publication date 1903

This book developed from an essay intended “for private circulation, with the title ‘Religion as a Factor of Life’ under the pseudonym Dr. Ernest Engels.”<sup>20</sup> Tyrrell assumes, in this work, that our spiritual nature develops within our religious sense which “furnishes an experimental criterion of belief.” In the human spirit there is a longing for the transcendent God, a longing that can never be satisfied. This bitter truth arises from experience. It is a difference of kind, not in degree, which leads to a life of solid value. He writes: “That we are dissatisfied, not only with what the Ideal gives us, but, by anticipation, with all it could ever possibly give us is proof that there is a higher love-power within us which must seek its object elsewhere.” Tyrrell notes that, one who seeks after that which is divine in life, “may give himself to God’s work, God’s will, God’s cause, and yet not give himself to God.” Tyrrell acknowledges an Augustinian perspective in his thinking and remarks that the finite is transfigured by an illuminating grace, encountered in experience.

*A Reflective Commentary*

I am living in a culture that has not been envisioned or brought about merely by one individual or by many individuals. Rather, my present culture is determined by many factors, physical, metaphysical, mental, human, and divine. Indeed, my present culture may even be over-determined by these factors. By that I mean no one factor can be held solely responsible for the direction of my cultural development. I am likely not to see my present situation as it develops until it is too late for me to significantly influence its direction. I must live within my inherited limitations. The truth is that my culture happens to me whether I like it or not. I cannot stop it. Yet, I am personally involved, even though minimally, in its transformation as it currently takes place. My present religious cultural context is that I live within the anxiety

and tensions that accompany the end of conventional Western Christianity. But within this tension there are indications of a new beginning and a new future. As a Catholic Christian, therefore, I must contribute to this future within my faith community and in collaboration with all of the churches and other faith groups.

In the West, soon after the Second World War, a shift in religious understanding in what is theologically sacred, and in what philosophically constitutes a person, took place. Significantly, this shift, which continues today signals a change in philosophical and, in particular, theistic theological thinking. The primacy of the collective continues to give way to the primacy of the individual. In the modern era the notion of the sacred is no longer based on a rural civilisation and monarchical society, which shaped the medieval church's governing structures. The shape of the modern church's governing structures is determined by industrial civilisation and democratic society. Given the contemporary governing structure of the Church those who are not adherents of the visible church may enjoy the social benefits of its mission, but they are not direct sharers in its spiritual life. This does not mean, however, that those outside the visible limits of the Church are not related to the Church, in some manner, even mysteriously. Further, it is sometimes argued, by theologians, that the true church, in each generation, may even be found with those who have been excommunicated from the actual visible Church. This view is not that unorthodox when we realize that the truth of the Church's creed is to be tested by its practical value in promoting the spiritual life and growth in the understanding of the believer. In Western society at large, it seems to me, that a new form of theistic understanding is coming to birth. As I rejected the traditional form of theistic understanding I experienced that my faith became capable of rediscovering that source which gave inspiration to the writers of the sacred scriptures.

Reflecting on the existential situation in which I found myself, I readily recognized, as a critical thinker, that Christianity has no cosmology of its own. And, unlike the Christian traditions, pagan religious traditions do have sacred cosmological mythologies and legends, which explain and interpret their understanding of

religious experience. Yet, paganism has no fixed creed of belief embodying its understanding. Nor does paganism have among its public figures martyrs giving up their lives for a moral law, as is the case in Christian history. Christian liberal theology, within the Catholic tradition from 1789 – 1878, as dated by Hughes (1947), has for its subject the human experience and Christianity bases its reflections on the spirituality of the human inner experience contextualized by various cultures. In the case of Christian liberal theology, the historical and written records of the church are a secondary mode in the interpretation of religious experience.

Theologians consult these written records of the church for orthodox interpretation. However, only primary reflection on the believer's religious experience provides the true subject matter. Liberal Christian theology, which is the perspective from which I write, belongs to the category of human experience, not to the category of philosophical scholastic theology. In my encounter with God, as revealed in Jesus of Nazareth and, since I am an intelligent being I transcend the boundaries of my existence in such a way that I become more truly and authentically myself in the presence of God. At least, according to Henri Bergson (1944). This type of genuine encounter in which boundaries are transcended is not reserved to mystics. It can be part of my existential situation. This encounter is at the centre of my Christian life which is similarly available to all believers in the revelation of Jesus of Nazareth. In this encounter, I come to know the Christian God as I come to know any other person, that is, through mutual self-giving. God gives to me; I give to God. On my part, this encounter necessitates a distinction between philosophical and theological interpretation. Philosophical interpretation and theological interpretation of revelation differ. Philosophical interpretation approaches revelation as a cognitive possibility; whereas, theological interpretation attempts to explain the historicity of revelation as a salvific event. Note that I do not say the historicism of revelation, but the historicity of revelation. There are limits to the use of philosophy in my existential understanding of my encounter with God. As with any personal relationship, a personal encounter with God defies total objectivity. Meditation on the

other hand, is a subjective experience of being-with, which transcends the conventions of my earthly existence. I cannot authentically know others unless I know them as persons, not as objects, and certainly not as virtual reality. God must be incorporated into my understanding of my self as a human person because should I take God out of that understanding I also take away that which makes me human.

As a writer of prose I may compose a story of mystery and intrigue without being in an actual situation or context of mystery and intrigue. In writing prose, I have a certain freedom and creativity not permitted to the philosopher. The philosopher's existential condition, the actual situation, determines philosophical thinking. Existential conditions, in fact, bring about a particular philosophical perspective. The poet, on the other hand, does not possess the literary freedom of the prose author, nor is the poet hampered by the existential restrictions of the philosopher. The poet transcends both. In short, I, as poet, am creating poetry, not manufacturing knowledge or cognition. Poetry reaches into the deeper constitution of my being and not just to my sense experience and reason. Poetry, as many of us have experienced, is able to evoke a deeper level of meaning than the merely conscious level of a rational interpretation. Such then, is the existential situation in which I find myself, as I write this book. And in it I must then make my Christian theological contribution as an individual in society.

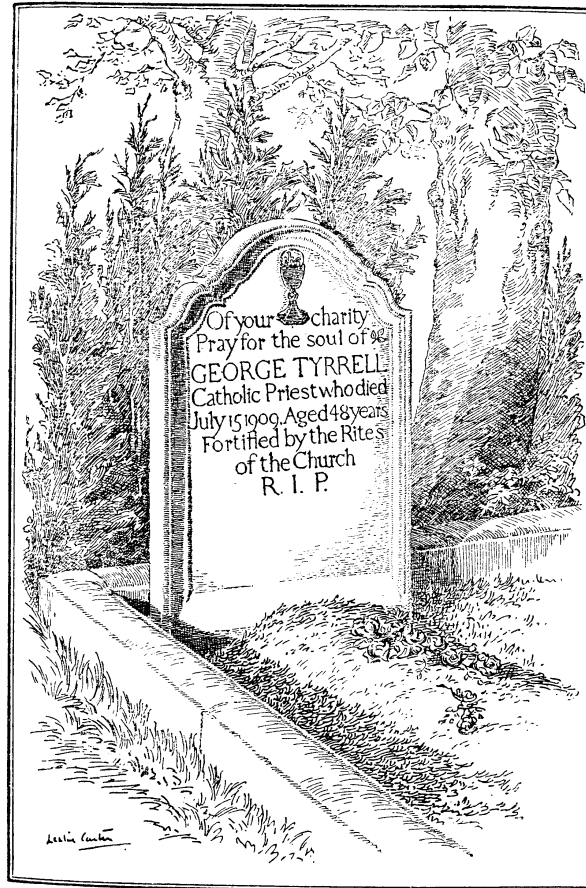
While it may be true that for many of our contemporaries God has died in the Western culture of the 19th century; God may yet return to our culture understood through the scientific use of new images and symbols. Interpreting these new images and symbols is the task of the scientific religious philosopher. But, it is to be remembered that the task of the scientific religious philosopher is temporary. The interpretive task is temporary for the theologian also. Contemporary thinkers know, from their experience, that there is no final philosophy or theology. The work of the theologian today is conceived differently than in the days of the construction of the great theological systems. The contemporary task of the scientific religious philosopher is to make known the

great abiding truths of rational belief to a new generation. The principle merit and usefulness of scientific religious philosophy, that is, of dehellenized philosophy, in theological interpretation is to satisfy the expectation of the believer living in community.

Illustration 3

THE RESTING-PLACE

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"If a stone is put over me, let it state that I was a Catholic Priest, and bear the Chalice and Host" (Last Will).

***Hard Sayings: A Selection of Meditations and Studies***

Publication date 1904

Tyrrell wrote the Introduction to this book in 1898. He assembled this group of meditations with the hope that “the unity of their effect” would be felt upon the reader’s mind. These meditations and conferences were written at various times over a number of years. Maude Petre describes this text as “clear proof and expression of the militantly orthodox phase through which he passed.”<sup>21</sup> In writing these meditations and studies he attempted to counter an excessive rationalizing of the principles of Catholic Christianity. He makes no claim to have succeeded. He reminds the reader that these meditations “will serve to bring to our mind all the meaning and expression of a face if only it be already familiar to us by experience.” Maude Petre’s assessment of Tyrrell’s effort reads: “The first object of these pages is, then, to make Catholics ‘appropriate’ that which they often content themselves to hold by mere inheritance.”<sup>22</sup> Where one meditation may be weak another may be strong, says Tyrrell, but some image of the whole truth may shape itself in the mind of the spiritual pilgrim. He cautions against a narrow rationalism that would lead the seeker of wisdom “to apply the methods and criteria of the ‘exact sciences’ to matters of a wholly different order, to be abhorrent of all that savours of mysticism.” Ultimate truths, concerned with the beginning and end of our existence, are set at the limit of our intellectual horizon yet our minds are made for understanding what lies between them. That is, we are made in order to understand the movements and processes that disclose these ultimate truths framing the beginning and end of our existence. It is not our human need that determines our faith in God, but rather, what God has done in Christ out of love for us that determines our faith in God, Tyrrell says that if true religion does not feed the mind’s craving for the mysterious, the wonderful, the supernatural, then the mind will feed “on the garbage of any superstition that is offered it.” But this is false mysticism, or self-delusion, and “no more discredits the true mysticism of à Kempis

or of St Teresa, than spiritualism discredits spirits or jugglery discredits the miracles of Christ.”

Reason is to help us in spiritual matters encountered in the mutable circumstances of human life. The collection of meditations in *Hard Sayings* is to be understood as a type of *disciplina arcani* based on Jesus’ parables which for those who could not understand “would have been only to their ruin and not their resurrection,” says Tyrrell. He shares with us a truth that he has come to realize. That is, the human heart is moved by the ethical conceptions of the Catholic religion. That religion embraces the clear conviction that she alone knows what is in man, and holds the secrets of life’s problems; that she alone has balm for the healing of the nations; that she alone can answer firmly and infallibly what all are asking, with an answer harsh at first sounding, and austere, but on reflection kind and consolatory, and, like the ‘hard sayings’ of her Master, ‘full of grace and truth.’

#### *A Reflective Commentary*

Christianity was born within the Hebraic culture. In the Hebrew scriptures, the world is presented as the field of humankind’s experience, the stage on which one’s work and destiny are played out. The human being is not interpreted in the light of the world, but the world is interpreted in the light of the human being. Sacred history is the major theme of Hebrew literature. Such history is not, as in Greek literature, the study of the past as a means of finding out eternal laws that govern all events. Rather, sacred history looks toward the future, to a divinely appointed goal. The culmination of history in Hebrew literature terminates in the notion of the Messiah. The hope for a Messiah is of ancient Hebrew origin and is one of the contributions of the Hebrew people to the world’s history. There are Messianic promises of a future in which God will create the people anew. The People of God must change their ways so that God can turn to them again. In Hebraic culture, and to some extent in Christian culture, it is not for human beings to reason why but to make their

submission to God. Such acquiescence goes together with a confidence that God will redress the situation in the future. Jesus turned away from certain nationalistic interpretations of Messianism current at the time and offered an inner-directed, subjective interpretation of Messianism. Christianity's dominant religious character is derived from its interaction with Greek culture. Greek culture in the centuries immediately prior to Christianity developed a definite form of mysticism.

Greek mysticism came to mean a particular sort of philosophical understanding of the whole of reality in which the intellect, and especially the intuitive, faculties came into play. This understanding was known as Neoplatonism, and it had subsequent impact in the early centuries of the Christian era. A system of Christian mysticism developed out of the strains of Neoplatonism, which became one of the main foundations of mystical theology. Neoplatonism may be outlined as follows:

- a) The phenomenal world of matter and individual consciousness is only a partial reality. It is the manifestation of a Divine Ground in which all partial realities have their being.
- b) It is particular to the nature of the persons that not only can they have knowledge of this Divine Ground by inference, but also realize it by discursive reason, uniting in some way the knower and the known. The nature of the human person is not singular but dual. A person has not one but two selves. One is spiritual, the other material. The phenomenal ego, of which one is chiefly conscious and one tends to regard as the true self, is a non-phenomenal, eternal self, an inner person, the spirit, the spark of divinity. It is possible for a person, who so desires and is prepared to make the necessary effort, to identify with his or her true self and so with the Divine Ground, which is of the same or like nature.
- c) It is the chief end of earthly existence to discover and identify with one's true self. By so doing, one will come to an intuitive knowledge of the Divine Ground



and so apprehend Truth as it really is and not as it appears to be to our limited human perceptions. Not only that, one will enter into a state of being which has been understood as eternal life.

The Messianic Judaic idea was foreign to the Greeks, but they were recognized as providing a philosophical foundation for the believing community. That foundation was an intellectual one. Consequently, a *rapprochement* occurred between the Judaic and Hellenistic worldviews. No longer was the immanent return of Jesus the locus of hope, but an interpretation of the inner life of the spirit, that is, mysticism began to develop in its stead. Christian theologians drew heavily on Greek philosophical ideas while distancing themselves from Greek religious mythology. The response of the early church to Greek paganism was to demythologize their religion. This meant proceeding in a more humanistic fashion while at the same time using Greek notions to articulate the mystery of their religious experience.

It would be a mistake to present mystical theology as a strictly philosophical and intellectual pursuit. It was not understood as such by one of the earliest and most influential Neoplatonic Christian mystics, Augustine of Hippo (+371). Augustine's contribution in shaping the inner-directed, existential, and psychological focus of Western mysticism lay in his awareness of the presence of God in the deepest level of human consciousness. While notions of religious feeling had entered into the earlier teachings of Evagrius (+399), Augustine's deep personal experience surfaced as the troubled ground of the human spirit itself, often wrought with the desire for the communion with God, but equally bereft of the sense of that felt communion with God.

According to Tyrrell's way of thinking one may conclude that when absolute unitary being is experienced it is usually interpreted in theological terms as the *unio mystica* (mystical union). That is, there is a unity between the "I" and the "Other," and the "self-versus-Other" dichotomy, is obliterated. The "I" is not a continuous, fixed entity. The true self is not discerned in advance but discovered in "becoming." The ultimate stage of human

development is the mystical stage of religious belief. It is this stage that provides ultimate meaning and integration.

Mystical experiences have long been the domain of spirituality, and spiritual theology continues to be well suited to address this dimension of the human person. In some circles it is maintained that traditional religions have outlived their usefulness and that they are no longer adaptive to modern technological society. Nonetheless, it is probably erroneous write off traditional religions as anachronistic.

***A Much Abused Letter***

Publication date 1906

Originally, Tyrrell did not intend to make this letter public. However, he justifies its public presentation due to altered circumstances and says, “I am convinced that such a course will remove far more scandal than it will cause.” In the Introduction he explains his reasons for changing his mind. They are: 1) that the letter in question is founded on ideas written two or three years earlier, 2) that the letter can only be judged in light of its original context, not read in extracts, 3) that parts of the published letter were not written by him but he does agree with their contents. These parts, he maintains, resulted from adaptation to local circumstances.

*A Reflective Commentary*

It is often easier to do things differently than think of them in different terms. Phenomenological understanding brings to consciousness relationships that clearly change not only one’s outlook on life but also one’s actual living. At least two authors qualify as other minds which can confirm this. One author, Ernest Keen writes;

while reading the proofs for [my] book, I have had a very sudden and powerful realization that once you take existentialism seriously, you accept face-on the idea that human beings are beings, living proactively and intentionally into the future, the whole business of reading books and of writing them becomes transformed. One is no longer comfortable with writing or thinking about the state of things, of life, or meaning, but one is thrown, bodily hurtled into the task of saying how we should, can, ought to become....The situation is, I now think, more complex and simpler than I had thought. It is a simple matter, in one sense, to take existentialism seriously. But it is frightfully

complex in its implications as soon as one begins to do so.<sup>23</sup>

The other author is Merold Westphal, who writes;

my own experience has been that the religious life provides a thoroughly convincing example of this wisdom. Surely a major reason why I've spent more time in philosophy of religion than in philosophy of science or art is that I came to philosophy more familiar with religion than with science or art. But stopping to ask the simple question about something so familiar; What does it mean to be religious? has initiated a process of relearning to look at the world of religion. I haven't ceased to be religious nor changed my religion; and yet the process has been anything but conservative. For I see so many things differently. At times the discovery has been exhilarating; at other times, personally painful. At the same time, I've been able to see students of every conceivable religious and non-religious attitude discover how such a simple question can open up avenues of understanding previously shut off by the familiarity of the subject matter.<sup>24</sup>

Carrying Tyrrell's hope a little further, Macmurray notes that there is a decline in religious influence and practice, and he hopes that some will take on the challenge such a decline offers. He writes:

Such a decline betrays, and in turn intensifies, a growing insensitiveness to the personal aspects of life, and a growing indifference to personal values. Christianity in particular, is the exponent and the guardian of the personal, and the function of organized Christianity in our history has been to foster and maintain the personal life and to bear continuous witness, in symbol and doctrine, to the ultimacy of personal values. If this influence is removed or ceases to be effective, the awareness of personal issues will tend to be lost, in the pressure of functional pre-occupations, by all except those who are by nature specially sensitive to them. The sense of personal dignity as well as of personal unworthiness will atrophy, with the decline in habits of

self-examination. Ideals of sanctity or holiness will begin to seem incomprehensible or even comical. Success will tend to become the criterion of rightness, and there will be spread through society a temper which is extraverted, pragmatic and merely objective, for which all problems are soluble by better organization. In such conditions the religious impulses of men will attach themselves to the persons who wield political power, and will invest them with a personal authority over the life of the community and of its members. The state is then compelled to perform the functions of a church (for which by its nature it is radically unfitted) and its efforts to do so will produce, the more rapidly the more whole-hearted they are, a crisis of the personal. If we remember that history has brought us to a point where we must think of human society as a whole, and not limit our outlook to the confines of our own nation, there must be a few who will fail to recognize, whether they welcome it or recoil from it, that we are involved in such a crisis.<sup>25</sup>

So it is in questioning our ideas, even though scandal may be caused, that we grow in consciousness and in right conduct. Often such a change on our part requires a painful justification to ourselves and others.

***Lex Credendi: A Sequel to Lex Orandi***

Publication date 1906

*Lex Credendi* was intended primarily as a “practical devotion,” or pastoral theology and only secondarily as speculative theology. It is the purpose of theology to comment on revelation. Tyrrell acknowledged that the “heart has its reasons” but it also has its language. There is need to have some kind of dogmatic conception for religious expression, but at the same time in Tyrrell’s mind, the church is not a school to translate prophecy into the exact language of thought. Rather, prophetic language must be universal. Of this book Tyrrell writes: “It is not then directly as an expression of my own private judgment and spiritual orientation that I say the *Credo*, but as an expression of the Church’s collective Faith, which I desire to share and appropriate, and which I acknowledge as a rule or norm.” It is the substance of the Creed, not its form that Tyrrell shares with us in this work. He seeks to share an experience of the Giver, not the gift; an experience of the spirit of Christ, not the teachings of Christianity; an experience of a full life rather than the implications of a Christian life.

*A Reflective Commentary*

Philosophizing, resulting in formal human knowledge, is a natural human activity and is not to be confused with revelation. However, no particular philosophy is required to qualify as thinking, but rather, all philosophy is certainly culturally influenced. Phenomenological understanding does not conform to a given system of knowledge or methodology. Phenomenological understanding is conscious understanding and can utilize any methodology.

Theologians interpret and understand religious experience according to the epistemological norms of their period. As I have written elsewhere, “Thomas Aquinas, whose theoretical interpretations were greatly influenced by Aristotle, teaches that human knowledge comes through one’s native capacity to know

and through one's experience.”<sup>26</sup> However, commentators on Aquinas have written that he allowed for a knowledge by connaturality, that is, a knowledge of acquaintance similar to that of a lover and the one loved.<sup>27</sup> The experience of an increasing number of Western theologians is that theology suffers from a reliance on theoretical epistemology in interpreting religious experience. They believe theology ought to undertake an existential approach and thus subscribe to an epistemology of being as opposed to an epistemology of knowing. A sense of the holy or sacred, as a prior condition for the meaningfulness of any form of theology, is a spiritual necessity. A phenomenological theological understanding of “practical devotion” does not represent things but presents presence actualizing that which is divine at this moment. This “presenting presence” is tantamount to being limited by the “other” and this allows an encounter with that which limits me, which includes God. This new style of thinking, which we must deliberately cultivate, discloses meaning in terms of concrete connections between people and the experiences that have religious significance for them. Understanding these connections comes through agreement and disagreement among individuals so that the truth of experience may be understood. This is not a natural attitude in the behaviour of the human mind. Rather, it is an acquired attitude. The natural attitude is to think uncritically, that is, the “what you see is what you get” acceptance of experience. This is the attitude of folklore and fable. The Hellenist Greeks introduced a critical self-reflective element into their thinking. They introduced theory, or a theoretical attitude into the process of human reflection. This shift in thinking occurred about the time of Socrates who lived circa 469-399 BCE.

The capacity for reflective thinking has allowed a phenomenological philosophy to emerge from the human mind and has led us to conceive that God is not responsible for everything any more. We have our responsible role to take in the interpretation of revelation. This understanding allows us to conceive ourselves as co-responsible agents and co-creators of our culture and society. With this status, we are able to correctly work towards building the kingdom of God on earth that more faithfully

reflects the revealed mind of God. The co-participation in divine creativity is the risk that God has taken with us which anticipates possible failure. This is perhaps why Tyrrell began his personal journey of faith from a phenomenological philosophical perspective. His phenomenological approach to theological interpretation is one of many and it is not exclusive, although it may be universal. The form of theological thinking may change, but not its revealed content. Brian Gaybba notes that “considering that theologians still differ about the precise nature of their discipline, it is not surprising that even two hundred years after its establishment as an academic subject there was no one universally accepted view of its nature.”<sup>28</sup>

A task of theology is to identify contemporary trends in the thinking of the faithful with respect to their understanding of God’s activity in the world even when those trends take us away from traditional understanding.



***Oil and Wine***

Publication date 1907

In this book, Tyrrell acknowledges writing as one seeking the truth “not from on high, as a teacher, but as an inquirer on the same platform as my readers” and as one who is just as blind as they. He has faith that the Spirit of Truth and Righteousness gradually reveals itself to the seeker of wisdom and works out its fuller manifestation in the community, and not in the individual. Spiritual progress comes with many a personal rude awakening, and “it is not ‘private judgment’ if, when it has irresistibly declared itself, we prefer the sovereign and most universal to any subordinate rule or ruler.” Of the Christ revealed in the Gospel, Tyrrell believed: “His spirit is not so concentrated and confined in the institutional church as not to be also diffused throughout Christendom and throughout humanity, where faith may often be found of a kind unknown in Israel.” Concerning his thoughts in this book, Tyrrell remarks that as unauthorized as they may be these “manifestations of the word” are offered as oil and wine to bind up the wounds of the “half-murdered wayfarer.” They are not offered as the “oil of consolation and the wine of spiritual stimulus.”

*A Reflective Commentary*

In the development of my Christian theism God’s existence is a matter of experiential fact, and not of necessity. That is, to exist necessarily, and to be present experientially are quite different understandings. God, as reality beyond the totality of being, is revealed not out of necessity but out of love, I suggest, following the mind of Brian Gaybba (1987). An emergent motivation, as it were, on God’s part, not an external cause, is the operative motive revealing God’s love to me. There is then, beyond the totality of all existing things, a presence present to me through my experience. When some other presence makes itself felt and makes me to be more than I would be, were I not exposed to its influence, my belief has then true foundation. To express this foundation requires

an adequate philosophy, which in turn gives rise to the need for a corresponding theology. What needs to be proven to me is not that God objectively exists. Rather, what requires a demonstration for me, since it is not immediately obvious, is God's presence to me. As a believer, as a philosopher and theologian, in what sense and with what consequences, God is present to me, I must determine philosophically and subsequently express theologically.

Philosophically, my human way of being, my self and my personality are constituted by my consciousness, which uniquely signifies my self to me. Thus, for me to be a subject, that is a person, is to be an object to myself. I no longer understand my personality in relation to an external nature. In other words, my personality is a manifestation of my self, at any given stage in its evolution. Consciousness and the interpretation of my experience constitute my personality, which is the equivalent of my life and existence. As a person, I am a being who desires to evolve beyond my present self. However, if I as a Christian look at the world and understand nature through Hellenic eyes, I will find it necessary to look to the past and not beyond myself. In looking to the past I subsequently assert the power of God over me. Through Hellenist eyes and focused on the past, I remain a creature with no opportunity to evolve to a co-creator status. Greek philosophy has introduced a split into the ontological status of God and humanity leading to an epistemological dualism. Phenomenologically understood, the God beyond me does not have absolute power over me in the classical sense. Rather, God's power is shared with me as a co-creator. Let me say, however, that nature does have its own natural causes independently of God's purposes. The fundamental relation between God and me consists, not in a hierarchical relationship of power, but in the mutual presence of God and me in a conscious unity within creation wherein I become a co-creator, sharing divine power. As I dehellenize my Christian theism my faith is recast and the meaning of religion is expressed in terms that do not imply God's absolute power over me, nor my inordinate submission to God.

In recent times, as Western philosophy has diverged more and more from its Greek foundations the concept of the supernatural

has lost its usefulness for my Christian theism. This is so since the mainstream of Catholic philosophy has remained Scholastic and therefore, somewhat unsympathetic to the contemporary scientific understanding of human nature. Thus, Catholic theology, especially the school of thought that has abandoned Scholasticism, increasingly turns to non-Christian and secular thought for support. This is the case also for the Teilhardians, that is, those philosophers committed to the views of Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955) or those other thinkers whose philosophical or specialized disciplines were never dominated by scholasticism; disciplines such as, scriptural studies, archeology, anthropology, etc. Concerning my worship of God, it might be better expressed that I render myself present to the presence of God. I may render myself present to God in interior prayer, which sends no message to God, yet through which I receive God's presence. Such interior prayer is grace. As well, I may worship in public ceremonies, which visibly and audibly unite my worship with others through a collective presence within the presence of the present God. In this context of worship, the concept of any transcendent supernatural is not a necessary part of my belief, if I conceive the founder of Christianity as Albert Nolan (1978) suggests.<sup>29</sup> However, what is absolutely fundamental to my belief is the "Otherness" of the Spirit of God, which is perceived in the Christian doctrine of grace. As immanent in me, the Otherness of the Spirit of God is known as the gift, or grace, (*donum*), of God. However, the traditional view of grace continues to be understood as grace building upon nature and not as the gift of the presence of God. In the immanent philosophical perspective that is a phenomenological understanding nature ceases to be juxtaposed to grace. Nature and grace remain distinguishable only, but not separable. Nature reveals the grace of presence because that is how nature has been created. Nature and grace remain only distinguishable, but not separable. Nature reveals the grace of presence because that is how nature has been created. Nature is co-terminus with grace and I derive my nature from being existentially, not metaphysically, related to grace. Thus, grace, as God's gift, is God's perpetual presence to me.

Contemporary theologians, both Eastern and Western, are beginning to realize that the structure of church government, which reflects traditional, classical theism, must change. Alexander Bogolepov (1963) has accurately noted that for practical considerations, ecclesiastical districts were established from the very beginning of the Christian era in conformity with the political division of the state, and under the Roman Empire the Christian assembly became a state church. The present ecclesiastical governing apparatus, based on territorial notions and not on God's grace or divine charism, is an obstacle to the ecclesial governance of the church now and will be for the future. Such territorial notions often do not conform to our lived, that is, existential social conditions. Nor do they reflect God's presence or charism. Further, it would be a theological error for theologians to promote the idea of a universal territorial super-church composed of all the faithful based merely on the philosophical notions of human political expediency. In this connection, we must remember that a universal humanity does not exist, but that individual humans do. Further, humanity, as a phenomenological notion, is expressed through a variety of individual philosophical, political and cultural patterns in which God is present.

*Through Scylla and Charybdis or the Old Theology and the New*

Publication date 1907

In the Preface, Tyrrell expresses the hope that others, more skilled than himself, once the controversy over his ideas has subsided “may perhaps take them up and turn them to better account.” Of these individuals, Tyrrell writes: “We cannot sift them out from the mass, but there is always a minority, a saving leaven, whose judgment is in truth the judgment of God, and before whom we stand as before an invisible eye that watches and judges, condemns and acquits.” To my mind, Martin Thornton may be among this minority.<sup>30</sup>

*A Reflective Commentary*

In modern times, phenomenological, or continental philosophy, has slowly been replacing classical philosophy as the underpinning philosophy in much civilized human development. The Church, as a social institution, is an example of civilized human development. In parallel, various other civilized human organizations, such as governmental, financial and societal structures, are engaging in dialogue with each other on an international scale. Such civilized engagements affect the development of my Christian theism. A phenomenological philosophical interpretation does not describe the same phenomenon that a classical philosophical explanation does. The former includes my consciousness where the latter does not necessarily include it. This accounts for a different phenomenon being recognized within each philosophical perspective. Further, as a phenomenological philosopher and theologian, in my interpretations,

I do not abandon my ideological origins in order to seek new perspectives. Rather, I engage my specific culture and demographic traditions to create a new meaningful philosophical understanding with a new focus to replace the old focus. Thus, a new understanding comes from my reflective experience, which

arises out of my ideological origins. In contrast to this approach some contemporary philosophers and theologians, both Eastern and Western, seem to prefer a return to a perceived golden era in scholastic philosophical and theological understanding rather than develop new meaningful understandings from their experience. Falling into such temptation, some Latin theologians are abandoning the phenomenological orientation introduced by Vatican II. In a similar manner, some Orthodox theologians suffer from the same nostalgic desire for a perceived philosophical golden age with respect to their ecclesiastical traditions, which often tend to fossilize the teaching of the Fathers.

It sometimes happens that particular local communities, which are culturally identifiable and unified with respect to their ecclesiologies, present themselves as universally valid models for all Christ's faithful. This approach will fail in practice because any universal identity of the faithful cannot be that of a particular community. In fact, the faithful are cultureless as a universal identity. In short, there is no universal culture. Rather, individual communities of the faithful are uniquely identifiable as a culture, within a culture. Writing from a political perspective, Victor Segesvary (2003) lists particular identities that one may possess within a given culture. Such as; being a member of a cult, football club, or a literary circle. Within the community, an individual may embrace all or only a few such identities. However, Segesvary notes that an irresolvable problem comes to the fore only when one of the identities is a fundamentalist one and is linked to an ethnic group or nation, a religion, or a cultural community. According to his thinking if my ecclesial cultural identity is narrowly fundamentalist it presents an irresolvable problem with respect to the development of my Christian theism. Phenomenological philosophers and theologians do not accept that the Church can force the faithful into belief. The Western Church did attempt this, however, during the Spanish Inquisition when scholasticism dominated the Western Church's thinking.

The attempt failed. Nor could any universal Church government, through propaganda, impose a unified religious identity upon the faithful. Rather, a unified and true religious

identity is achieved through the faithful participating in the decisions about their own affairs in the local parochial and cultural context. This religious identity achieved through participating in decisions requires a reduction of the universal legislation governing the faithful. Particular legislation must be the norm. Ecclesiastical government, in contrast to ecclesial governance, is a hierarchical bureaucracy and a totally impersonal way of determining and managing the affairs of the faithful either on a particular or universal level. Thus, all things being considered, and because I am one of the faithful, this bureaucratic crisis affects the development of my Christian theism.

In late Modernity, rapid technological advances have increased the opportunities for bureaucratic control over the faithful who live in a secular and westernized culture. The Internet is a case in point. With the advent of the Internet a new ideology, (called virtual reality), not merely technology, is in the process of being developed with the assistance of rapid scientific advancement. Regretfully, at this point, virtual community often seems to suggest a negative ideology, potentially threatening the person. The Internet is a de-personalizing forum since it has no need for physical, that is, embodied contact among those who use the Internet. In the internet virtual community there is no possibility of a humanitarian incarnation such as constitutes existential physical human relationships. Virtual community is the simulated computerized version of existence, which presents many philosophical and theological challenges to our understanding as incarnated individuals. To my mind, a non-incarnated and technological relationship, misnamed as a virtual experience, cannot reflect any true human society or community since the simulation by the virtual decision-makers is not identical to the experience of actual persons. The inordinate and uncritical use of internet technology is likely to create, as it were, eventually incompetent, non-humanized, and “un-incarnated” individuals. However, on balance, the internet has been known to stimulate the human mind to develop its knowledge, whereas television, the other modern medium, has been known to dull the mind’s activity. In short, the internet turns my mind on and television turns my

mind off. Both have their effect on the development of my Christian theism.

The lack of competent, incarnated and humanized individuals, or personnel, formed merely within the virtual reality of the ideology of the Internet, subsequently causes a lack of competence within the Church’s theological teaching authority, the Magisterium. Non-humanized and un-incarnated individuals will influence the understanding of Christian theism accordingly. It is for this reason, then, that any hope on my part as a philosopher and theologian for government of a universal church, brought about solely through a virtual and technological means, is abandoned as unrealistic. And, dare I say it, such merely virtual technology should be also abandoned as non-human? Victor Segesvary (2003) reminds us that humanity, as a community of individuals, is too big an entity to be the bearer of a single shared culture.

Yet, individual cultures do require a community as their bearer. In this respect, our contemporary cultural world is not that different from the world of ancient cultures. Although, many contemporary philosophers and theologians do suggest that Modernity is different from everything that has preceded it. As well, many contemporary thinkers suggest that modern humanity, the result of the evolutionary process, is an exceptional gift to the universe with its variety of ideologies.



***Medievalism: A Reply to Cardinal Mercier***

Publication date: 1909 [1994]

This book lacks a Preface or Introduction. However, a Foreword for the book has been written by Gabriel Daly. He provides an historical and doctrinal perspective of the issues and the intellectual climate of the time that influenced Tyrrell's thinking. Daly understands this book to be "a faithful reflection of [Tyrrell's] most typical attitudes and convictions."

*A Reflective Commentary*

There are three significant literary practices that may be identified in the Western tradition of interpretation; the allegorical interpretive approach of Greek fables, the Midrash of the Jews, and the grammar and rhetorical style emanating from Hellenist Alexandria. In the theological interpretative climate of Tyrrell's day, a phenomenological approach was beginning to be evident if not already in place. Within three decades of Tyrrell's death "the *Société Thomiste* met in Juvisy, France, to discuss the question of whether or not Catholics could adopt the phenomenological approach as presented by Husserl and Heidegger."<sup>31</sup> Judging by the negative reaction to existential thinking as put for in *Aeterni Patris* the Magisterium believed that the church could not accept a phenomenological philosophical basis for its theology. At best, it might accept to up-date the language of its theology understanding. Classical philosophical structure conceives that which is divine as being somehow "out there," whereas, the phenomenological philosophy of Husserl and the early Heidegger view that which is divine as somehow a constituent of our inner experience and not independent of it. I suggest that it is part of Tyrrell's attitude and conviction that it is to the individual's spiritual welfare to investigate the relationship brought to consciousness by a phenomenological philosophical understanding.

Phenomenological understanding, recognizing relationships rather than theories, differs in degree, not in kind, from theoretical

understanding. Both are human intellectual undertakings. Phenomenological philosophy is intentionally constructed, and deals with symbols, not with signs. Signs, unlike symbols, do not require an interpretation since they are “context neutral” and indicate a standard significance, regardless of context. Signs communicate a universal and fixed significance in any context. Presented through words or pictures, “stop” means “stop,” context notwithstanding. To the contrary, a symbol evokes nuanced meaning for the individual in picture or speech. In light of Tyrrell’s approach to theological thinking, it is not unreasonable to suggest that he would accept that phenomenology, as it has become a constituent of modern philosophy, is a roughly satisfying way of explaining our inexplicable experience, albeit not a definitive way.

***Christianity at the Crossroads***

Publication date 1909 [1963]

The Foreword of this book was written by Alex Vidlar, the Introduction by Maude Petre and the Preface by Tyrrell. Vidlar notes that those who were influenced by Tyrrell acknowledged that “they had found that he had a rare gift for interpreting the Christian faith and for illuminating the spiritual life.” Maude Petre speaks of Tyrrell’s peace of soul, his undisturbed friendship, study, prayer and character which were true goods in his life. He was not ambitious for fame or notoriety. He did not seek controversy but rather sought a calm understanding of controversial issues.

Tyrell hoped for a synthesis between the essentials of Christianity and the scientific criticism current in the theological debates among the so-called Modernists. He noted that scientific truth and religious truth must each be examined by the principles of their respective disciplines. When he attempted this synthesis he realized that the discord initially caused was much less than expected. According to Maude Petre this book is a calm “examination of the value of this life, a study of its relation to the next.”

*A Reflective Commentary*

In the Roman Catholic tradition, Avery Dulles notes that Modernism has influenced much of the existential phenomenology and theological empiricism since Vatican II.<sup>32</sup> As traditional religious and classical images do not fit well within contemporary culture, so also the terms of the Modernist movement have lost their significance for the contemporary social and cultural context. However, the *Sacramentum Mundi* notes that, “It is undoubtedly true that the inner religious experience is an essential element of the life of the spirit and in many cases the psychological source of faith.”<sup>33</sup> Similarly, as I have argued elsewhere, “Theologians of the Modernist movement sought to express theological truths in

modern images and terms. They introduce new thresholds of interpretation, i.e., phenomenological understanding.”<sup>34</sup>

Our time is unique and requires a creative religious imagination in order to read the signs of the times. A certain liberty of language and expression is required and religious belief ought not to impose a specific language that might frustrate a broad acceptance of religious issues in Christian interpretation. A certain liberty of language and expression gave rise the Roman Catholic Modernism that broke open the reified religious systems of Catholic theology of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Religious belief has shifted from the medieval synthesis achieved by Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa Theologica*. In our time religious belief has evolved toward a holistic understanding. The holistic understanding makes the study of religious belief infinitely more meaningful than the dichotomous nineteenth-century outlook. In holistic understanding one does not separate the human person into parts and faculties, into inner and outer, into personal and private. We are all of those things at once and much religious belief consists in bringing our multi-faceted composition into a meaningful unity. Religious belief is actualized in the interiority of the person’s own subjective consciousness, but lived in a concrete situation. Traditionally, ascetic or mystical theology encompassed much of what we mean by the term religious belief. Given the current emphasis on community, culture, anthropology and language, religious belief must broaden its scope to account for the presence of these disciplines as well. A contemporary understanding of religious belief can, in fact, achieve that simply by allowing these disciplines to be part of the current debate thereby allowing a transcendent principle present within these disciplines to become present to our consciousness.

There is living tradition, which continues in theological debates, only if a present belief is oriented toward a future belief. The perpetual death and rebirth of differing forms of belief in the Catholic faith are part of the living tradition of the church. The phenomenological approach to religious belief allows individuals to express their deepest desires and to be nourished by important traditions. Further, the phenomenological approach provides a new

opportunity for dialogue concerning the issues of religious belief. The primary theological contribution of Roman Catholic Modernism is precisely its emphasis on the value of tradition, or pre-modern forms of thought, as having significance for our time. As Christianity spread during the patristic period there was debate about the manner and the extent to which Hellenist philosophy could be used to understand the revelation by Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ. The early Patristic teachers were deeply divided over the extent to which Hellenist philosophy should enter the Christian understanding. Some, such as Tertullian (ca. 160-225 CE) and Tatian (ca. 120-173 CE), were passionately opposed to Hellenist philosophy and culture for fear that such an influence would adulterate the gospel. Others, however, such as Justin Martyr, (ca. 112-165 CE), and Clement of Alexandria, (ca. 150-212 CE), endeavoured to understand the message of the gospel with the assistance of Hellenist philosophical concepts. Notwithstanding Tertullian's protestation, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" Christian understanding eventually accepted Hellenist philosophical terms. Henceforth, philosophy, even that which originated with the pagan Aristotle and Plato, would become an *ancilla theologiae*, that is, an understanding of philosophy as a helpful servant to theology. Such openness to Hellenist philosophical concepts, opposition in the Patristic period notwithstanding, find expression once again in the medieval Scholastic philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas. He synthesized Aristotle's ethics, cosmology and metaphysics within the Catholic message. Bold use of notions borrowed from traditions outside one's own, while not without controversy, has always been a living part of the Catholic theological tradition. This is being felt today as theology critically engages postmodern religious belief.

*Essays on Faith and Immortality*

Publication date 1914

This book was published by Maude Petre after Tyrrell’s death. She wrote, in the Introduction that Tyrrell possessed a “strange self-detachment” that fitted him for addressing “a problem which some of us can hardly endure to face.” She arranged these essays in light of Tyrrell’s intention of addressing the problem of faith and immortality. About these essays she wrote: They “will serve their purpose if they do what their author was always satisfied to do, namely to give the lead to some other mind which can carry the search a little further.”

*A Reflective Commentary*

I suggest that faith, hope and charity reflect the divine element in the “Catholicizing” spirit of Christ as understood by Tyrrell. The virtue of faith is the response-movement to an invitation from God which presupposes a capacity to relate to another. God is the object of faith in the sense that recognizing God, as a subject, sets up a relationship between two individuals. This relationship is a dynamic one which means that it has the capacity to grow and develop. But the act of faith proves nothing as to the existence of God. The setting up of this faith relationship is a subjective experience that admits of no verifiable scientific investigation. Further, the faith response initiated by one individual inspires the same response in others of like disposition. Thus, faith has a communal dimension. This attitude of faith is not an additive to the individual’s experience. It is not acquired externally. The attitude of faith arises within the conscious experience of life. The act of faith characterizes what it means to be a human in community. An individual human being grows physically, psychologically and spirituality. The faith response brings about some positive change, some positive movement or some development in the individual. Thus, an individual who is faithful toward the person of Christ and the Church ought to be able to show signs of being a Christian.

That is by being a forgiving individual, by being a compassionate and generous person.

The tension between the classical notion of faith and the contemporary notion of faith is not unhealthy. The individual's experience varies from generation to generation and from culture to culture. Thus, it is reasonable that one's faith relationship varies from generation to generation, culture to culture. A philosophical variation in understanding is possible since the Christian faith is not wedded to any given cultural form, any more than it is found as a pure essence, devoid of a concrete social context. Christian faith can be cast not only in the traditional philosophical concepts but also in the emerging philosophical concepts that an evolving human experience creates.

Hope is connected to faith. Christian hope is directed properly to its object God, as revealed in the person of Christ. Christian philosophers and theologians have held this view since medieval times. Hope is eschatologically determined as humans seek to create a better future in life. In some manner the future may be realized in the present time since hope is exercised in knowledge of a future goal. I argue that what we hope for is in the process of being realized in the present moment. Those who live in hope encourage each other, strengthen each other, and affirm each other against hardships and any apparent meaninglessness of life. The individual and the community live in the expectation that their hopes will be realized. There is an element of risk in life which the individual cannot avoid. Life is not certain. Hope offers no philosophical certainty, but offers venture. One who lives in hope lives as if living in knowledge and thus is not subject to the criticism of credulity. Hope gives a meaning and a purpose to life that prevents an unhealthy attitude from overtaking an individual. Thus, the healthy individual finds hope uplifting and motivating.

Charity is unmotivated love understood from a psychological perspective. That is, charity does not seek to act for requited love, but is an evoked response because one has been loved by another. From a theological perspective, do for others what God has done for you. I suggest that Christians, ideally, do not need to "do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Charity encourages

the overcoming of evil, as God has shown us in Christ, and allows for the divine presence to be revealed.

It is urgent that theologians find creative ways to offer what is unique in their interpretations to the world. If true religion does not feed the mind’s craving for the mysterious, the wonderful, and the supernatural, then the mind will feed on any superstition that is offered it. Historically, the church and formal religion were the institutions that provided the context for religious belief to be understood and expressed. As institutions that formally guided behaviour in the pre-modern and modern era began to collapse, the issue of the need for the church to reinterpret itself became critically important. To carry the argument a step further, contemporary philosophers, whether they are Jewish, Christian or Muslim, have a personal responsibility towards their respective communities of faith. This responsibility applies to their effort to produce a reasoned and scientific philosophy that is capable of supporting the faith of their traditions. It is more responsible for the religious philosopher to promote a reasoned and scientific philosophy, than a cultural folklore. A reasoned philosophy is not a new philosophy given that its roots extend back to the ancient thinkers. However, a reasoned and scientific philosophy is new in that it has produced the natural sciences that characterize Modernity. My mind follows that of Alister McGrath who has probed the manner in which the natural sciences have “become the *ancilla theologiae nova*.”<sup>35</sup> A reasoned and scientific philosophy, as an *ancilla theologiae nova*, is not confined to a particular revealed faith tradition but is susceptible of interfaith dialogue. I do not suggest, however, that this personal responsibility need apply to religious philosophers of other, non-revealed belief systems or traditions.

Among all the disciplines available to assist me, as a theologian, in the critical task of collaborative reflection, a scientific philosophy is a most fundamental one. Psychology, sociology, history anthropology, etc., make a contribution to the task but it is only philosophy that is in a privileged position to undertake this task of theological collaborative reflection. The task of the scientific religious philosopher is not to look for a polemic



opportunity to prove a doctrinal point. Rather, the task is to express and to clarify the reflective experience of faith vis à vis scripture and tradition. Such is the primary task of the Hebrew, Christian and Islamic scientific religious philosopher, or theologian. After Vatican II the Roman Catholic Church deliberately attempted to enter conversation about religious meaning in the public forum with other faith communities. Vatican II recognized that the corporate Church is to serve all humanity in its religious, as well as, secular life. This recognition raised the problem of the Church re-defining its religious philosophy in the public forum. It needed to move from a religious philosophy that had, to a great extent, become Romanesque folklore to a scientific philosophy. Specifically, beginning from the 19th century onwards, the Roman Catholic Church left its classical corporate self-understanding to a significant degree and took on a personal self-understanding. Within Christendom this change in perspective initiated the so-called Modernist Movement, being a “phase of the liberalising movement in the Church of Rome by the *Civiltà Cattolica*, and it may be accepted: Modernism may be described as the shape which religion takes in the mind of the modern as distinct from the mediaeval man.”<sup>36</sup>

Modernism yields its greatest insights when viewed as a scientific philosophy which expressed itself within Roman Catholicism. In its self-understanding, the Roman Catholic Church had to abandon the theoretical notion that a single cultural norm, originating in ancient Rome, could continue to determine its self-understanding in the tradition of Hellenistic philosophical thinking. Thus, it was that the Roman Church accepted the phenomenological philosophical approach that through a variety of cultures an active self-understanding could be developed through a process of a scientific religious philosophy, or which is the same thing, through the process of dehellenization. Modernism, within the Roman Catholic Church, was condemned and had no future among Catholic religious philosophers. However, history suggests otherwise. It appears, to the benefit of the Church, that positive insights have been gained from the scientific scholarship of Modernism. These insights have been introduced into Western

theology by Catholic philosophers. One such insight, hoped for by Tyrrell, was that subjectivity and inter-subjectivity in philosophical methodology would replace ideological theory and ratiocination as primary in philosophical thought. However, much contemporary Catholic religious thinking seems to be developing away from such scientific religious philosophical thinking. Today, a particular philosophical understanding characteristic of an earlier age, Roman scholasticism, seems to be supplanting Vatican II's phenomenological approach and favouring a return to a Hellenized and traditional understanding and abandonment of a phenomenological understanding.

In contemplating revelation, scientific religious philosophers do not confine themselves to any pre-given philosophical system. Our scientific philosophical reflections arise out of an intellectual world of the inner human experience that is disclosed within various cultures. In a similar manner, pre-scientific cultures, such as the folklore cultures, but not of the Jewish, Christian or Islamic traditions have mythologies that explain and interpret their inner human experience.<sup>37</sup> Christian scientific philosophy differs from Christian ideological philosophy in that it takes human experience as its primary subject matter, not doctrine and dogma. This means that, as subject matter for a scientific religious philosophical interpretation, historical texts and records in themselves are secondary. In short, scientific religious philosophical reflection is an activity of reflection on personal experience, not on the intellectualization of ideals or values.

In a scientific religious philosophy, I transcend the boundaries of my creaturely existence in such a way that I become more truly and holistically myself. Such a transcendental encounter is not for mystics only. Rather, it is the centre of life for all Christians. I come to know my self as I come to know any other person, that is, through reflection. This requires a perpetual scientific philosophical effort in the first person.

The variety of ideologies identified by philosophers and theologians as ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic traditions may develop into transnational ideologies. True, one culture can adopt the traditions of another. However, in a religious context

there will be conflicts among groups of the faithful, that is, parishes and local churches which confess a particular ideology. When cultural variety is ignored, as has been the case in our historical, political and religious context, an expectation about a future global union of churches, patterned after a world civil government, seems logical to some philosophers and theologians. Note that I say a global union, not unity, of churches. Such a civil universal expectation, however, results in a negative effect on the development of my Christian theism. In our present circumstances, were this global union of churches to come about the governmental apparatus of the churches would no doubt resemble the dominant secular culture of the West. The problem in accepting the Western cultural pattern for government of the Churches is, as I understand it, that Western secular education, being technologically driven, has given me a specialized, but incomplete, knowledge about the world.

This knowledge is not conducive to a full development of my Christian theism. This specialized knowledge lacks an encompassing view of the world. Bits of information from contemporary science and technology can only become appropriate knowledge after an individual has processed them mentally to produce a coherent whole, or a holistic unity. Phenomenologically understood, this holistic unity is greater than the sum of its individual parts. As Henri Bergson (1944), notes. To form an idea of the whole of life cannot consist in combining simple ideas that have been left behind in us during the course of evolution. In short, I suggest that contemporary science and technology have only repackaged scholasticism, as it were. They have not revealed a holistic unity, in the process. Further, given that individual bits of information in themselves do not constitute a holistic unity, a world union of churches constituted by bits of information would lack the totality of the shared beliefs, values, symbols, language, history and customs that would properly constitute a holistic community of churches.

A universal governing ideology cannot be constructed phenomenologically. Phenomenologically, an understanding of others, their civilizations, and ways of life is to be discerned

through dialogue and through the examination of relationships without the interference of preconceived ideas and without the presumed superiority of the Western scholastic philosophical and theological tradition. Our common humanity suggests, to many philosophical and theological thinkers, the need of a universal humanitarian understanding to designate the human being. Victor Segesvary (2003) notes that universalism is a millennia-old dream of humanity dating from the time of the Stoics. The desire for universalism was clearly evident in the medieval Church and is reflected in modern ideologies like Marxism and liberalism. It should be remembered, however, that universalism does not denote universality.

Universalism is a scholastic philosophical term, whereas universality is a phenomenological philosophical term. Thus, normative universalism is an ideology, which reflects the moral and ethical principles arising from within a particular culture. It is highly doubtful that a universal moral and ethical principle, applicable to all peoples and in all times, can be drawn from a specific civilization. To attempt such universalism would be a philosophical, as well as political, mistake to my mind. Further, such normative universalism would be a misnomer, as well as a deficient state of affairs, comprised of nothing but a local community's mores. In contrast, given my intent to develop a proper future for ecclesial governance and a proper future for the development of Christian theism, what I must come to understand is a humanitarian universality that is holistically discerned and based on common human social origin.

### *Concluding Remarks*

The foregoing discussion has led me to the following conclusions with respect to the theological reconstruction and the phenomenological understanding of my Christian theism. In the status quo, the government of the Church, both Eastern and Western, must move from a classical ecclesiastical methodology, that is, from a scholastic architectural methodology, to a phenomenological ecclesial methodology. A phenomenological

ecclesial methodology is an organic methodology. As such, it enables a proper and appropriate development of theism by the Christian faithful appropriate to our times. The main obstacles to organic ecclesial governance are the various architectural and political authorities, civic ideologies that determine modern individualistic cultures. The uncritical acceptance of these conditions, impede the proper development of Christian theism.

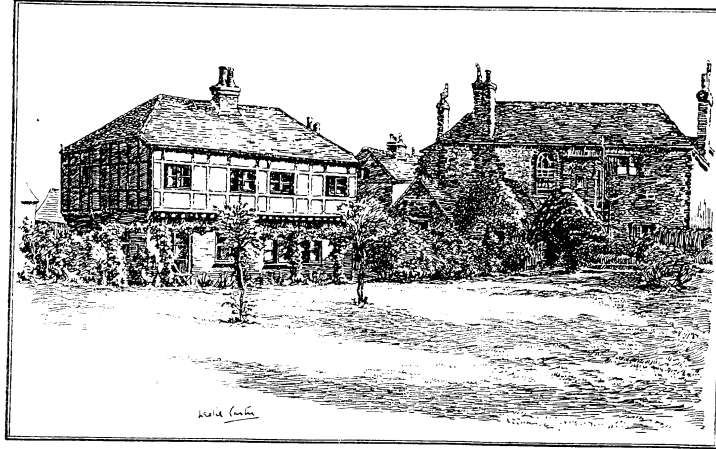
By way of further example, territorialism, not territoriality, is a product of an architecturally constructed civic ideology with its roots in classical Hellenistic philosophy. In contrast, territoriality has its roots in phenomenological philosophy. The same observation may be made about the notions of Catholicism and Catholicity, nationalism and nationality, historicism and historicity, humanism and humanity, communism and community, etc. as noted above.

Territoriality, as describing a community, encompasses a notion which includes more than the community's mere physical location. It embraces the linguistic, cultural and historical understanding and self-understanding of a community. A phenomenological methodology accounts for this shift in understanding from "-ism" to "-ity" in philosophical thinking. In adopting a phenomenological methodology, with respect to governance, dioceses in the future cannot be *determined* externally by territorialism, but they must be *constituted* territorially. That is, they will be constituted through an experience of individual residence, upon a physical space on the earth, which embraces the effects on the individual of linguistic, cultural and historical relationships. The experience of relational residence in physical space will constitute the diocesan framework of organic governance, replacing the ideological architectural government that presently exists. Dioceses that are constituted out of an experiential cultural framework, that is, organic governance, and are not dependent on physical or political territory, will be directed by governors who lay claim to a limited, or contextual sovereignty based on their communities' existential interpretation of experience. Nor will such organically governed dioceses be bound by theoretical or political borders. In light of the above, then, my

understanding of Christian theism is constituted within a phenomenological, not classical approach, to the interpretation of my experience.

Illustration 4

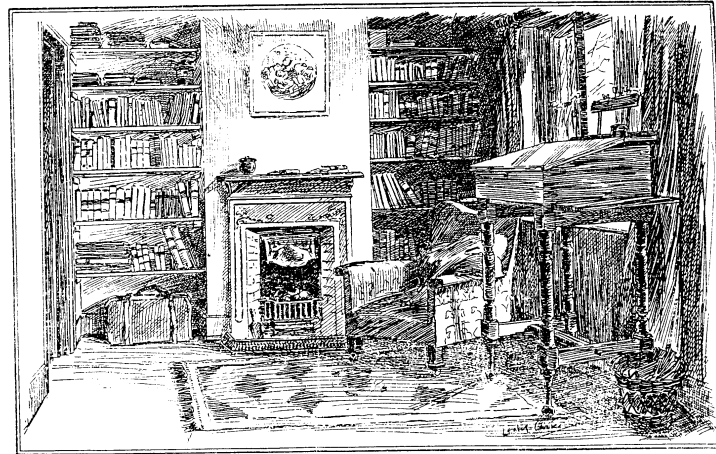
Mulberry House



COTTAGE IN THE GARDEN OF MULBERRY HOUSE, STORRINGTON.

EXCOMMUNICATION

343



FATHER TYRRELL'S ROOM AT MULBERRY HOUSE.

"I want a nest with my books round me."

THE END OF THE JOURNEY

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## **THE LAST PHASE, 1890-1918**

### **A Point of Departure for My Future of Belief**

The above sub-title, “A Point of Departure for My Future of Belief,” introduces “My Personal Process of Constructing Christian Theology” given below and to Tyrrell’s contribution to my theological and spiritual development. “Can metaphysics present a reliable point of departure for a future of belief,” I had asked myself. I had been taught, throughout my academic formation, that it can. Is science a better approach, I wondered. Could science be but a different type of philosophy rather than the non-philosophical discipline many understand it to be? Many contemporary thinkers accept that science has dethroned religion. And thus in the realm of knowledge, religion for them, enjoys little more than a folklore status, or than an uncritical mythology. In the PhD thesis of Leslie Dewart entitled “The Development of Karl Pearson’s Scientific Philosophy,” which he defended in 1954 at the University of Toronto, I found the beginning of an answer to my questions. Dewart wrote:

The question is...that science has done away with the worn-out, outmoded forms of religion, and yet has done nothing to fill the vacuum it has created. For man, by his very nature, needs a religion yet, after the advent of science, nothing has come along to fill this need. The dilemma of science and religion is not then to be solved by a choice between the two, but by the harmony and integration of both.

I suggest that the harmony of religion and science may be achieved in answering the question, “what is man, or, what is humanity?” To this question I answer man, or the human being, is a creature that can approach God. Is the better approach to God through religion or through science, I wondered, each of which describes the human condition? Or, is the better approach to God through the unity of both constituted such as to reveal the participation of God in humanity’s life? This, to my mind, is the central problem of contemporary Western philosophy. The tension between religion and science began shortly after the fall of Constantinople when Greek literature introduced into the Latin world a new way of thinking which was critical and not disposed to the acceptance of uncontested theological opinion. Science is concerned with the application of experiential truth to the practical life, that is, science is an ethical approach to life. Within the Catholic philosophical tradition, ethics is associated with human action, that is, with what humans are or are not to do; whereas morality consciously involves that which is divine and which can unconditionally give to and demand of its creatures.

Science cannot answer the “why” question in interpreting the experience of movement or growth. Science merely puts our experience in order, or which is the same, explains the “how” of movement or growth. Thus, science is one method of approaching our experience. Other methods exist, as well, i. e., the metaphysical, the poetic and the mythical, but only science gives knowledge through the human classification of our experience. There can be no knowledge, in this view, apart from the human mind, since knowledge is a product of the human mind. In short, unless there is a “knower” there is no “known.” It is possible for there to be an “unknown reality” however, incapable of being known by a human being. That being the case we must remain agnostic concerning knowledge of this reality.

Science when it looks to the past is a description, when it looks to the future it is a belief; it is never an explanation that answers the “why” question. In the Western context, until the Age of Enlightenment, knowledge was ultimately directed towards religious ends, that is, philosophy was to serve theology. Today,



however, for science to fulfill its proper role it must be free of religious or theological methodologies that are not true to the experience of the scientific methodology.

Reconstruction in Western theism is a theological process that characterizes the modern era. Its task continues and many of the issues raised in the process remain unresolved, or even understood, which accounts for much of Western theological indifference. The last phase, or a point of departure for a future of belief, has its roots in the *Nouvelle Théologie* which came to prominence in the mid-20th Century in France. Taking my queue from the *Nouvelle Théologie*, I abandon the scholastic approach and embrace a phenomenological approach. I explore the reconstruction of Western theism as a departure point for my future of belief. To aid the reader in understanding my thinking I cite the historical understanding presented by Alexander Dru in his *The Contribution of German Catholicism*. His historical understanding of the theological developments as they unfolded in Germany and France provide, to my mind, a basis for a future of Western theistic belief. He writes:

The last act of the reign of Pius IX began with a double event: the declaration of infallibility, and the loss of the Papal States; on the one hand the affirmation of the spiritual power, on the other the collapse of the temporal power. In terms of foreign policy this meant a state of open conflict between Church and State, more violent in France but better known under the name it received in Germany, the *Kulturkampf*. The limits had been reached: the policy of relying on the “thesis” [that Christendom still existed] could not have been carried further, and Leo XIII turned to the “hypothesis” [the self-criticism of religious motives]. This does not mean that the acts of his pontificate were inconsistent with those of Pius IX. Leo’s aim was that of his predecessor: to maintain the claims of the papacy, and if possible to extend its power. The thesis was not for one instant lost to sight, and until the year of his death Leo XIII thought in terms of pope and emperor, of Christendom. But by temperament, training and experience he was a

diplomat, and in the place of open conflict he desired not merely co-existence but collaboration as implied by the Concordats....For in the situation as it now existed, it was becoming increasingly clear that the choice was no longer between conservative and liberal Catholicism, but between accepting the situation and rejecting it – between opposing it (on the grounds of the thesis, or hypothesis) or accepting it: between political Catholicism and religious Catholicism.

For the first time the seriousness of the position in which the Church found itself was being taken seriously. In the place of the customary lamentations about "the evils of the age," which placed the whole responsibility for the decline of religion and the dechristianization of France on the Revolution and its consequences, on the Freemasons and the Republic, the grave weakness within the Church were taken into account and the salutary principle of self-criticism was applied by a few. Moreover, this was done, not from a political point of view, and in pursuance of immediate political results, but from religious motives. What followed was not a change of policy, but a revolution, which has little to do with the 'liberal Catholicism' of Lamennais, Lacordaire and Montalembert. Furthermore, it was not conducted by politicians, or by men interested in the main in social and political questions, but by philosophers and poets, by historians and men of letters....This was the real, cultural background to the failures of the nineteenth century, which self-criticism revealed. Since the seventeenth century the Church in France had relied on political power and influence, wherever possible silencing opposition, and finally isolating itself from the nation. Since the end of the seventeenth century Catholicism had abandoned the cultural sphere for the political in which it was possible for a time to maintain the 'thesis' that Christendom still existed, and consequently it had ceased to be a missionary Church inside Europe, hoping to preserve a static position, its 'power,' by making Concordats the basis of its

policy....This attitude cut the Church off and isolated it, and its authoritarianism became a sort of caricature of spiritual authority.

The 'crisis' of which Blondel wrote was caused by the unavoidable reversal of the Roman policy, necessitated by the situation which could now no longer be denied. This reversal was finally and officially proclaimed by the Lateran Treaty, and by the condemnation of political Catholicism under the name of the *Action française* in 1926. The aims set before the present Council [Vatican II] by John XXIII are those which emerge naturally in the new situation: both *ecumenism* and *aggiornamento* imply the abandonment of power in favour of a purely religious policy. It is often implied or asserted that the 'crises' which began in 1890 and exploded during the pontificate of Pius X centred on the Modernist controversy. That was no doubt the impression given at the time, and moreover it suited the *Action française* and its supporters in France and in Rome (of whom Cardinal Merry del Val was the most important) to make the problems raised by the Modernists the central questions. This distracted attention from the political issues, and moreover it made it possible to stamp any form of opposition to political Catholicism as 'Modernism.' But in retrospect (and without for a moment minimizing the importance of Modernism) Claudel's diagnosis points to the central issue: the crisis was the 'tragedy of a starved imagination' – or, in Blondel's terms, the tragedy of the 'whole man' *le tout de l'homme*, cut off from the cultural sphere. It is of course possible to write the history of the period in negative terms, to group events and interpret them as a series of heretical movements – in the social sphere the *Sillon* condemned in 1909; in the theological sphere Modernism, condemned in 1907; in the philosophical Laberthonnière's condemnation in 1913. And this has been so effectively that the real leaders of the Catholic Renaissance, the creative writers and thinkers and historians have been ignored or treated in isolation. But if

instead of rehearsing the mistakes or possible mistakes which were made, the positive achievement of the period is taken as the criterion, the work of Blondel, Péguy, Bremond, Claudel and others stands out in its real proportions. It then becomes possible to see that Claudel was right in saying that the ‘crisis’ had culminated in the nineteenth century, and that the ‘crisis’ which occurred during the reign of Pius X was in fact the first stage of its *dénouement*.<sup>38</sup>

## **MY PERSONAL PROCESS OF CONSTRUCTING A CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

No one in philosophy is ever completely original, obviously. The idea of philosophical originality is practically a contradiction in terms, if one takes the terms literally, since philosophy already presumes a history. An original thinker places himself within an existent current of philosophy and, cannot not presume something of the history of the attempts of his predecessors even in his own originality.<sup>39</sup>

I discuss my personal process of re-constructing a Christian theology in this book from a subjective point of view. Therefore, by reconstructing a Christian theology I mean engaging dialectically with the world which I have inherited and the world that I subsequently create for myself. Within this process, in fact, I am in dialogue with two subjective worlds, as it were. The world that I have inherited is subjectively interpreted; the world I construct is subjectively created. In the process of constructing Christian theology, I contrast contemporary theological understanding to traditional theological understanding that has become inordinately influenced by Hellenistic, or Ancient Greek philosophical understanding. Leslie Dewart's efforts at dehellenization are an attempt at a new philosophical construction within theological knowledge.<sup>40</sup>

Drawing on his insights, I focus in my process of constructing a Christian theology on the way my belief has been shaped by relational, as opposed to merely ideological, forces. Hence, "roles"

as opposed to "goals" are the subject of my attention. My theological construction is based upon human insight that has come into being with the advent of society and, in particular, Western or Hellenistic society. That is to say, my process of theological construction is one that is critical of copula verb "to be." For, "to be," means to be some-thing joined to, or connected with, an underlying reality. My investigation of contemporary theological construction reveals that a particular dichotomous philosophy has mistakenly become regarded as necessary for theology. This philosophical error may be corrected by viewing understanding as a unified phenomenological activity, not as a dichotomous scholastic or theoretical activity. This is a difficult task for the contemporary thinker and requires effort because "the intuitive view is that there is a way things are that is independent of human opinion, and that we are capable of arriving at belief about how things are that is objectively reasonable, binding on anyone capable of appreciating the relevant evidence regardless of their ideological perspective."<sup>41</sup>

The personal process of constructing Christian theology arises within my experience. My experience may be negative or positive which in turn affects my understanding and subsequent social construction. Reflecting upon my experience negatively, I may conclude that my civilization is dying. Things are not the way they once were. Life is decadent. The Christian moral values that I once acknowledged publicly are challenged within my society and often appear as conflicting opinions. Media headlines suggest to me that, world destruction is near given the perpetual state of war and conflict in which my world seems to be engaged. The moral principles that formerly held my life together seem to be disintegrating as the traditional supports of my social life are undermined.

Reflecting on my experience positively, the world goes on because I, like the ordinary person, am cheerful and optimistic. The ordinary person believes that life is good and he or she feels a part of a larger rhythm of creation despite its apparent corruption. Ordinary people do experience an abundance of the life in which they participate. Often this optimistic attitude is expressed in

religious life, that is, vowed life, or in a secular and respectful attitude toward life and creation in general. Devout people often experience religion as one reality among others, such as the philosophical, political and economic movements that have characterized human development throughout the ages. Scholarship and the process of theological construction are not ends in themselves. Each is a human intellectual and social activity. Neither produces any philosophical system. Neither is permanent but only supplies temporary points of view that are contingent upon the cultural context of the thinker. Once I have given meaning to my experience I have entered the realm of philosophy. Philosophy is an activity reserved to humans living in society. Brute animals, because they lack a philosophical sense, cannot attribute meaning to their experience. The members of human societies and institutions intentionally relate themselves to the events within their common experience. The simpler stages of anthropological and cultural development, such as, tilling, fabricating tools and shelters, along with the rearing of the young, become established as habitual intentional activities as time goes on. These stages, in due time, gave rise to new experiences and subsequent interpretation that demanded further re-adjustment within a given society, or within the institutions of that society. Thus, the human world continually becomes more philosophically complicated in its theological construction and this affects the religious lives of its inhabitants.

In the process of constructing a Christian theology I do not suggest a metaphysical ideology as the basis for theological construction. Theological construction is rooted in philosophical wonder that is prior to the formulation of any metaphysical ideology. Philosophically speaking, the Psalmist has it right, I believe. "What is man that you should care for him?"<sup>42</sup> Further, the inquiry into human nature is prior to the inquiry into divine nature. As I come to realize the need to possess my own soul, as Augustine did, I seek God in which to rest my soul.<sup>43</sup> Existentially, I am linked to an earlier age in theological construction and I recognize that present day problems are simply the logical outcome of the so-called Modernist Crisis of a not-so-long-ago

age. In the process of my theological construction, I relate then to experiential issues arising out of theological Modernism and not speculative philosophical problems.

My Christian theological construction is based upon God’s revelation within the ecclesial context. The *ecclesia* is formed by being “called out” of the general social context or cultural milieu in response to the divine summons. This being “called out” in response to the divine summons gives Christian theological construction its unique character and capacity to express God’s revelation. All social institutions are the means whereby individuals are able to relate to each other. Family, government, church, agriculture, trade, etc. are examples. The decay or the growth of any one of them will have a corresponding affect on the individuals making up the social institution. Theological construction cannot take place in a self-defensive and self-isolating context characteristic of decay. Rather, it needs a constructive and supportive context characteristic of growth. The faith of individuals, I included, needs the instruction and nourishment provided through divine revelation. In undertaking this reflection, I am not intending a devotional or pious work, nor do I intend an exclusively professional academic and philosophical one. However, I do intend to address the educated and theologically interested reader. I do this inspired by Leslie Dewart and through the original insight of George Tyrrell. In short, constructing a Christian theology is my attempt at satisfying my intellect where traditional understanding seems to have failed.

My contemporary Christian theological construction is based on my “style of life,” not upon the natural or supernatural schema of traditional theological understanding. Christian theological construction must occur in a specifically religious context. Further, theological construction is proper to human beings, who cannot help but discover themselves as being Christian or non-Christian. Theological construction discloses the humanitarian characteristics of self-discovery that distinguish the thinking animal from the brute animal. Thus, Christian theological construction possesses its own special worth with respect to knowledge and human action. Christian theological construction, engaging emotion, feeling and



intuition, enables me to encounter that which is transcendent as my consciousness extends beyond my sensible experience. The purpose of investigating George Tyrell's "avant-garde" theology is to direct my efforts towards formulating a proper process for Christian theological construction thus avoiding the distortions of past ideology, of present fantasy and, uncritical "new age" thought.

Christian theological construction presumes that a relationship between God and humanity has actually been established and has taken on the special features of unique personal self-discovery with distinctive insights. Therefore, I must exercise critical discernment in forming theological constructions based on my experience. Christian theological construction meets my personal needs when: 1) its purpose is related to my actual experience, 2) its purpose is discovered within my social relationships, 3) its purpose is to serve a further definite practical function of spiritual growth. My personal process of Christian theological construction starts with the established relationship between the risen Christ and me. I must undertake the task of theological construction and may do so, without error, only insofar as I have learned to enter the corporate faith reality of the *ecclesia*. Since my process of Christian theological construction needs to be set within the proper background, before discussing the characteristics of my contemporary theological construction, I shall present the understanding of theology that has influenced this work.

### An Understanding of Theology

Theology began as a professional activity with the formation of the universities. Initially, it was undertaken informally within the ecclesiastical context, the vocational guild, as it were, and its purpose was to serve the Church in establishing and formalizing her doctrine and dogma. However, I understand theology to be an evolving social construction which clarifies doctrine and dogma. My current intent is to re-think theology within an ecclesial context of faith and do so outside the ecclesiastical guild of an earlier theological age. As I use them, the phenomenological term, ecclesial, reflects relationships as constitutive of the Christian

communal life. The classical term, ecclesiastical, refers to the historically conditioned structure governing the Christian community. The doctrinal and dogmatic formulations extant in most ecclesiastical institutions are founded on a classical theological ideology. As a consequence of this foundation over the centuries there have been various rhetorical accretions that have clouded reflection in theology. These accretions developed into theological understandings that did not always relate well to contemporary experience of theologians. Therefore, the theological reflection that I undertake today in an ecclesial context must differ from the reflection that took place in a traditional ecclesiastical context.

The way in which I conduct my contemporary theological reflection outside of the theological guild is through critical reflection. Critical theological reflection itself is a unique human activity and an innate capacity of the human mind. Critical reflection engages theologians, philosophers and psychologists to probe into the depths of the mind to disclose an “other.” Critical theological reflection discloses the believer’s best efforts at constructing an authentic Christian anthropology. As a believer, this authentic Christian anthropology discloses an understanding of human life and purpose that enables me to evolve as a member of humanity. Thus, critical reflection in theology has three humanitarian purposes for me. The first is to relate humanly to my actual experience. The second is to disclose truth as a human relationship. The third is to grow spiritually within an ecclesial community.

In this section I reflect upon my experience outside the traditional philosophical mould of an ecclesiastical guild. I have rejected the form of expression of an earlier Medieval Christian theology, influenced, as it is, by out dated Aristotelian categories. Such theology lacks resonance with contemporary cosmology as has been noted by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.<sup>44</sup> In addition, by reflecting outside the guild, I have avoided the accretions of disputed ecclesiastical, political and power-related issues that emerged in the Reformation and Counter-Reformation but which today are no longer relevant. Thus, in my context I have opened

the way for new reflections and theological investigations. In reflecting on my religious experience I take seriously the notion that the Enlightenment period, which began in Europe, has introduced by virtue of its epistemological, historical, and evolutionary development legitimate expressions of religious experience.

In North America, given its historical and theological patrimony, theologians are intellectually connected in their thinking to problems traceable to the philosophical and theological context prevalent in pre-Victorian England. During this time and well into the reign of Queen Victoria (1837—1901), England remained virtually isolated from Continental and theological philosophical thought. However, a critical examination of English philosophical and theological texts of that period reveals some influence of German thought.

At the beginning of the 19th century, Rationalism was in vogue in England and on the Continent. In his review of religion in the Victorian era, Elliot-Binns distinguishes two strains of rational thought that were hostile to religious, and in particular Christian, experience. One train of thought was the overt and complete rejection of the whole Christian system, typical of France. The other train of thought, which was typical of Germany, tolerated Christianity but gradually reduced it to a mere caricature of its former self.<sup>45</sup> The existential and less rationalistic Germanic thought, that later evolved into phenomenological philosophy under the influence of Martin Heidegger and Edmund Husserl, resonated with the English theologian George Tyrrell. Although he died before any formal development of the phenomenological school of thought in England, his thinking was definitely heading in that direction.

In constructing my philosophical position, I follow closely the existential way of thinking noted by W. K. C. Guthrie. He reminds his readers that philosophers do not think in a void. In fact, their thoughts are products of three interrelated factors: their temperaments, their experiences and, their reading of previous philosophers all of which make up their life-world.<sup>46</sup> One of the pioneers of the phenomenological and existential method of

philosophy was Edmund Husserl. He taught that philosophers can reflect on all experience, inasmuch as it presents itself to consciousness, according to a clear methodological framework since all knowledge appears within a complex series of cultural contexts. Phenomenological philosophers urge that the world of experience takes precedence over the abstracted and theoretical world of the sciences. Langdon Gilkey notes that, from a personal perspective, the public task of the theologian is primarily the analysis of life with regard to its religious issues and dimensions and, only secondarily as an analysis with regard to economic, sociological or psychological dimensions, although each of these has a religious basis and ground.<sup>47</sup> As a phenomenological philosopher and theologian I conclude, therefore, that an existential reflection on constructing Christian theology in the contemporary world, although undertaken individually, is not a private enterprise.

My theological style falls within Jeff Astley’s understanding of doing “ordinary theology,” which pays attention to personal insights arising out of experience and theological thinking. Ordinary theology takes place outside the traditional guild. According to Astley, original theology is rarely done. He maintains that theological thinking today is often undertaken as the study of other people’s ideas, which is not a self-critical reflection on one’s own particular religious experience and ideas.<sup>48</sup> Although modern theology may have begun in the academy, it cannot remain in the academy as John Apczynski has shown.<sup>49</sup> Theology given its purpose, must address the questions, problems, and data that arise within all aspects of human society. The thought of any theologian, (and in the final analysis this means anyone trying to understand his or her own ultimate meaning), emerges from the *lebenswelt* (lifeworld) of the individual. A theologian’s *lebenswelt* forms the existential milieu, in Pierre Teilhard de Chardin’s sense, of the cultural, social, and religious context of life.

Theologians are continually searching for new and meaningful ways to reflect upon religious experience outside the traditional theological guild. In my approach to theological understanding I do not consider the legacy of the past as hardened and dead with respect to the present any more than I ignore the lives of those

critical thinkers who have shaped the past. Although they are physically dead, from the perspective of a contemporary theological construction, the legacy of those critical thinkers who shaped the past continues to shape the present. Their theological legacy is significant not by virtue of ecclesiastical endorsement, but by virtue of its relevance to our present time and experience. Theological construction within an ecclesial context, which is greater than the mere guild, must be in dialogue with artists, musicians, novelists, poets, psychologists, and always with the Scriptures. Here, I draw on Marshall McLuhan's insight:

One thing which characterized the finer arts—poetry, painting, music—areas with which we're all familiar—for more than a century, but certainly for the past century, has been a continued insistence on their relevance to daily living. There has been quite an impressive chorus of urgent requests in all fields that we take seriously the arts as basic social factors of enlightenment and guidance and training.<sup>50</sup>

It is quite clear then, to my mind, that my contemporary theological construction must incorporate aspects of the human temperament, experience, and understanding of both past and current philosophers and theologians within the Western cultural context. Eventually, in the course of history the initial diverse theological understanding of the *ecclesia* developed into a uniform theological construction that became normative for the Christian life, particularly in the Western Church. For example, the two early diverging and distinct schools of theology, the Alexandrian and Antiochene schools, came into being over Christological controversies. These schools reflected their respective cultural understandings. As well, these schools were never homogenous groups. As M. C. Steenberg notes, homogenous schools never existed in the concrete sense. Theologians within them may have managed to encompass convergent themes and approaches, but they never developed a uniform system.<sup>51</sup> The presence of these schools indicated that diversity was an integral aspect of the *ecclesia's* theological construction for some time after the death of the apostles. As the *ecclesia* evolved it interpreted its experience and theologically constructed its self-understanding in different

fashions. Between the Judaic and Hellenistic world-views, a theological rapprochement prepared the way for a new articulation of the Christian life. No longer was the imminent return of Jesus the main focus for reflecting upon the Christian life. An interpretation of the Christian life, which drew heavily on Hellenistic philosophical ideas, subsequently cast the Christian life in a new light. And in turn, this affected theological construction within the *ecclesia*. The influence of Hellenistic philosophical ideas continued in the Church for centuries. As Brian Gaybba has pointed out, the various schools of reflection on the theological construction of the Christian interior life were developing long before the Reformation.<sup>52</sup> The Franciscans and Dominicans were the two dominant schools, among others, which had developed to advance the theological perspectives of particular religious orders.

In the Middle Ages, a change in the structure of theological understanding concerning the Christian life came about with the controversial introduction of Aristotle’s philosophy. The Scholastic method of interpretation, influenced by Aristotelian and Platonic thought patterns, was the best tool for intellectual argument in that age. Aristotelian and Platonic thought patterns were presented within Thomas Aquinas’s theologically constructed synthesis of Aristotle’s cosmology and the Christian message. One consequence of his theological construction was that Thomas relegated spiritual or mystical theology to a subdivision of moral theology. Eventually this theological approach became dominant in the Roman Church. To my mind, it is significant that through the acceptance of Aristotle’s cosmology, Christian theology produced a very “act-centred” message that was never fully realized, nor theologically understood, by the faithful. Consequently, reflection on the Christian life developed into various static legalisms. Sandra Schneiders points out that this theologically constructed medieval synthesis held together until the middle of the 20th century, when the culture-shattering events of the two world wars, the technological revolution, various liberation movements, an explosion of knowledge and, the rapid developments in the humanities of philosophy, psychology and other social sciences, all together brought this comprehensive hold of the medieval

synthesis on the Christian mind and imagination to an end.<sup>53</sup> Out of this new non-scholastic milieu diverse theological ways of thinking have been constructed and now re-shape the hermeneutic of Christian theology.

My critical reflection on the Christian theology often leads me to ask: Is church membership a prerequisite for doing theology? Can I do theology outside of the revelation in Christ? Concerning theological construction in the *ecclesia* some Christians saw and, continue to see, the Invisible Church contained within the Visible Church. Yet, the Invisible Church certainly is not identical or coextensive with the Visible Church. That there are many souls within the Visible Church that do not belong to the Invisible Church and, that there are many souls not within the Visible Church that belong to the Invisible Church is still a thoroughly orthodox and common saying,” notes Baron von Hügel.<sup>54</sup> Thomas Foudy has written of Tyrrell’s notion of the relationship between the Visible and Invisible Church: “For him the invisible Church here on earth does not extend beyond the limits of the visible Church except so far as faith extends; it includes all those who give God primacy in their lives.”<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, in undertaking a critical reflection on the Christian life as ordinary theology both theologians and religious philosophers need to “enchurch” their thinking somehow. They need to do this in order to theologically construct the historically called community.

Love for God provides motivation for studying theology, which is historically, for Continental theologians, at least, tantamount to schooling in the Christian interior life. Coming to understand the things of God out of love is the beginning and the root of all theology. In short, theology is not merely an academic programme of studies arising within the medieval universities. It has a practical dimension. Brian Gaybba reminds us that the phenomenon of Liberation Theology is rooted in love. “With the sure instinct given by Love, liberation theology has ‘whether it realizes it or not’ retrieved the classic Augustinian tradition that only love gives full understanding of the things of God.”<sup>56</sup> From the foregoing understanding of theology, how do I relate truth to love? Truth is the result of God’s love for those in the world and,

of those in the world whose practical learning is with the school of the Christian interior life. Further, practical learning within the school of the interior life invites the seeker to experience God’s love outside of his or her inherited religion. Seekers of God’s love are more likely to feel their relationship with God than to understand it. The Spirit of Christ helps seekers feel the truth and then formulate it. Once formulated, the Spirit of Christ helps all feel their way deeper into this formulated truth. Thus, the *lex orandi*, the rule of prayer, is more deeply understood as a product of the community’s, not the individual’s, experience. The *lex orandi* is the theological construction of the community’s unfolding of the Christian interior life, not of an isolated and individual experience. Theological construction arising from community’s experience presents the criterion for theological truth. But, theological construction does not set the criterion for private judgment. For Christian life to be healthy and bear fruit it must unfold within a community and be connected to the theological construction that constitutes the community’s life. That is, the community is to be the school of the Christian interior life.

### My Personal Approach to Theology

My personal theology does not consist in a doctrinal or dogmatic representation of ecclesiastical corporate ideas. My personal theology is a reflective account of my thinking as affected by the reading and digesting of texts of other theological philosophers. To illustrate my personal theology, I offer below a selection of reflections arising within an existential theology. Initially, my personal reflections seemed new to me but I soon discovered that similar reflections had been undertaken by William Gladstone (1809—1898) and George Tyrrell (1861—1909). Even though I am writing in 2012, William Gladstone, George Tyrrell and I share the same theological cultural context.

During my undergraduate years at the University of Toronto, Leslie Dewart had introduced me, in his lectures, to the theme of dehellenization in philosophical and theological thinking. When I encountered the writings of William Gladstone and George Tyrrell,



I discovered that in their own context they had embarked on this theme, in its broadest sense, which had not yet been named within Western theological and philosophical circles. In my personal approach to understanding theology, contemporary theologians, whether they are Jewish, Christian or Muslim have a personal responsibility to their respective communities. Since I am included among them my theological thinking must be carried on within, not without, my community. Our communities mediate the experience of believers as they pass on to future generations the fruits of their theological reflection. In order for a theologian to be credible today critical reflective thinking is a requirement. I undertake critical theological thinking within an existential philosophy, which is a dehellanized philosophy. In addition to any interfaith theological discussion on revelation among Jews, Christians and Muslims, there is the further issue of critical reflective collaboration among all theological philosophers including those of non-monotheistic religions. Critical reflective collaboration is a clear, consistent, professional and systematic sharing of insights into the personal, but not private, experience of God. The sharing of such insights constitutes existential (dehellanized) theological discussion. Philosophy, among all the disciplines available to assist me in this task of constructing Christian theology in the contemporary world, is the most fundamental one. Since it critically expresses my personal belief, philosophy is to be preferred to other disciplines, such as sociology or psychology, in assisting me. Philosophy is my personal, but not private, way of evaluating experience, whereas psychology and sociology are corporate ways of describing religious experience. The more recent disciplines of psychology and sociology as “soft” sciences share scientific clinical roots. G. E. Newsom notes the advent of psychology as a new discipline bringing its own significance to the world of science. He writes: “There is another development of science, that of psychology, and especially of religious psychology, which has come in with the new century and which may well be as characteristic of this century as physical science was of the last.”<sup>57</sup> This is not the case for philosophy, which is the more ancient discipline. Existential philosophical

questions, not idealist questions, preoccupy me today. Existential philosophical and theological ways of thinking are the means by which I evaluate my experience as a member of a community. Even so, I do not have all the right questions to ask much less all the right answers.

To my mind, within an existential theological understanding, what is said of Christian theology may be said, *inter alia*, of Jewish and Islamic theology. An existential theology transcends cultural expression and denominational religious traditions. That is to say, an existential theology is not reserved to those theologians who officially represent the organized and visible community. Further, existential theologians recognize that not all members of the visible church belong to the invisible church and vice versa. Christian existential theology, by transcending denominational and official corporate interests, is less likely to become enslaved to an institutional and political ideology. The primary locus of an existential theology is the word of God addressed to the believer in community. Not being a member of either of the Jewish or Islamic faith communities, I do wonder to what degree this transcendence of denominational, (or sectarian), interests occurs in their theologies. Existential theology is an abandonment of the classical model of traditional theology, which has often been a polemical promulgation of doctrine and dogma. To my mind, should theological thinking fail at transcending institutional interests and become a mere servant of the visible corporate community, and not serve the believer, that failure is tantamount to a living death for both the community and believer.

Existential theology must be distinguished from religious studies, which is a separate discipline in its own right. As a distinct academic discipline, religious studies has its roots in the Western academic thinking characteristic of the mid to late 19th Century. In its pedigree are listed philology, linguistics, historiography, anthropology, ethnology, archaeology, and sociology. In the contemporary academic context, religious studies seeks to describe religious belief within cultural terms and always with a concern for the corporate community. Theology, however, in the contemporary philosophical context and having been influenced by the

Enlightenment and Reformation, seeks knowledge not from an ideological and rationalistic perspective but from an existential and phenomenological perspective. However, despite this evolution of theology with respect to its role, for most professionals it is still perceived to be a service limited to persons preparing to minister in a particular religious community or corporate faith tradition. Within my philosophical perspective, however, I recognize the primary role of theology as rendering a *ministerium verbi divini*, that is, a service to the Word of God. That is, revelation, in the full sense of word and sacrament, is beyond mere service to the institutional community.

Theology is nothing less than an understanding of personal religious experience, individually or collectively. As a reflection on experience, theology is not merely a theoretical discipline. As merely a theoretical discipline theology would be reserved to reflection on the Church's corporate catechism, or on the ideological doctrine or dogma of a faith tradition. Reserving religious reflection to the Church's catechism, or ideological doctrine or dogma, is more properly the domain of religious studies than theology. From an existential perspective, data that are the *loci* for theological reflection are not reserved to the classical philosophical disciplines studied by professional academics. Rather, all experiential data collectively provide a *locus* for theological reflection. For me as an existential theologian, there are certain *existentialia*, or existential experiences that constitute my life. They are fear, despair, love, hope, suffering, death, happiness, and guilt. Yet, these *existentialia* present only one part of my existence, the human part (*a partis hominis*). They are not of God's part (*a parte Dei*) which is also present to my existence. Thus, as an existential theologian questions arise for me that require responses from each part, God's and mine.

Scripture, not the confessional idea, is the primary and necessary datum for an existential Christian theology. This is not to deny that confessional corporate ideology, known as tradition, provides important theological data. However, confessional corporate ideology is secondary. To my mind, the former metaphysical attempts seeking to prove that God exists are futile in

the contemporary world. Further, such attempts at a metaphysical philosophy that are not rooted in experience tell us nothing. The task of the existential theologian is not look for a polemical opportunity to prove a doctrinal point. Rather, the theologian’s task is to express and clarify the experience of faith, *vis á vis* scripture.

In contemporary Western culture the Christian life may be legally private but it is ethically and morally public. Christian theology, therefore, is ethically and morally accountable within the public forum. The accountability of Christian theology, which brings about social transformation resulting in a new social construction of the public forum, arises from the personal relationship between the individual and the public community. My Christian duty, that is to say Christian response, is not restricted to certain aspects of ecclesial life. My Christian duty is nothing less than the response to my total ecclesial life that is shaped by the larger public community.

After Vatican II the Roman Catholic Church deliberately attempted to enter a conversation with other faith communities about religious meaning in the public forum. The theologians of Vatican II recognized that the Church is to serve humanity in its secular life. This raised the issue of the Church re-defining her theology in the public forum. Writing before Vatican II, William van de Pol, a convert to Roman Catholicism, notes that the role of serving humanity in its secular life was already part of the Church’s practice although not necessarily evident to all.<sup>58</sup> Today, Christians are conversing, both intellectually and spiritually, with many other religious communities, both Christian and non-Christian. From the late 19th century onwards the Catholic Church left, to some degree, its classical corporate self-understanding, and took on a contemporary personal self- understanding. To my mind, this change in perspective was significantly promoted by the so-called Modernist thinking within Roman Catholicism. In understanding herself from an existential perspective the Church thus abandoned the previous notion that a single cultural norm, originating in ancient Rome, could continue to determine her self-understanding.

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In the contemporary North American context, the corporate Church seeks to dialogue with partners holding common beliefs wherever they may be found. Tolerance, as many of us know, is a significant virtue in the North American civic tradition. However, in addition to its positive effect, tolerance may have a negative effect as well. Too much variation in public discourse fragments civic culture. It appears to me that a workable discourse in the public forum is lacking due to an exaggeration of tolerance. As well, too much variation in belief makes dialogue among partners extremely difficult. Further, the effects of an inordinate tolerance extend beyond national boundaries. Global Westernized culture lacks an accepted theological language about meaning, value and experience in order to host a successful discourse in the public forum. As a result, I personally am not as influential in the public forum as I may have been in the past. This leads me to conclude that Christendom, my previous ecclesiastical context, is dead or at least dying. Even though I have been born into an ecumenical context, that has been well established and can easily be distinguished from a secular context, I still experience the lack of an ecumenical public language. This lack of an ecumenical public language makes discussions with non-Catholic Christian theologians difficult for me. To add to this difficulty, science, which sets the standard for contemporary secular discussion, does not give me answers to my deeper questions of meaning. I conclude that my deeper existential questions need to be answered by philosophers and theologians and not scientists.

The Western intellectual tradition, from the Hellenists onwards, reflects a notion of an individual and collective *humanum*. This *humanum* is that which constitutes humanity. In the West it has been traditionally the goal of society and government to enhance this *humanum*, through a humanitarian social construction of civic society. Only in the recent past has this goal been challenged by the concept of a sovereign individualism taking preference over the notion of an individual and collective *humanum*. However, in Christian existential theology, the idea of individual sovereignty is not an absolute goal. Rather, an individual must be subordinated to God in some manner. *Gaudium*

*et Spes: The Pastoral Constitution on the Church*, of the Second Vatican Council taught that there is inherent value and meaning in the lives of individuals in this world. *Gaudium et Spes* notes that Christian humanitarianism is founded on the human dignity that is ultimately grounded through God’s revelation to the Christian community, not to particular individuals. The *imitatio Christi*, then, as a particular way of life, is an embodiment of a personal and collective role in a community. It is this personal and collective role that expresses the *humanum* within the contemporary Christian community. Being an existential philosopher I have two tasks of equal obligation. The first is to interpret the corporate tradition of the faith to which I belong and the second is to interpret my personal experience within that corporate tradition. In my interpretation, I have noted that the theological language, once inordinately influenced by the Enlightenment, has ceased to be solely theoretical and rational. Secondly, I note that contemporary theological language is no longer separated from the human and social sciences. Theological language has become a personal expression arising out of the encounter with the social sciences. Thus, I no longer think of the social sciences in merely mechanistic terms, but rather I now think of them in humanitarian organic terms.

In my reflections I have come to agree with the thinking of Sarah Jane Boss who notes that in Western society holiness and sacredness are not perceived to be that important in the public forum. As I noted earlier a phenomenological understanding is an alternative to a theoretical understanding. A phenomenological understanding, which is the same as an existential one, does not emphasize any acquisition of vocational skills nor does it emphasize the development of a more comprehensive understanding of the faith. The proper intent of an existential or phenomenological understanding is dehellénization of all things social which is nothing less than the conscious creation of the future of belief in holiness and sacredness in the public forum. This is a radically different view than the dominant one in our present North American culture.

Originally, theological colleges were set up to serve the academic interests of the Churches in debating various theological opinions surrounding doctrine and dogma. However, today Christian theological education is being directed towards an existential formation of the whole person in having one's mind conformed to Christ in such a way that praying and believing are one act. Given this role, Christian theology divorced from prayer is in trouble. A theology that arises from my experience of the Christian God contributes its own perspective to my conscious creation of the future of belief. Pastoral psychology and counseling, arising from an academic study of religion, address my emotional centre. However, neither psychology nor counseling addresses my spiritual centre. A pastoral theology rooted in an existential understanding, instead of psychology or counseling, helps me to order my life within the dimension of the sacred and what is holy.

My philosophical reflections focus on the unfinished theological business of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, namely, the so-called Modernist Movement. This Movement arose from a tension between the personal and corporate theological understanding of Catholic theologians and the Church. It challenged the dominant corporate theological mind-set of the time with its roots in the scholastic tradition. As a result, the so-called Movement was terminated by the ecclesiastical authorities and had an insecure future among Catholic theologians. However, many of the insights that have benefited the Church have arisen from the critical scholarship of the Catholic theologians of this period. One such insight is the attention paid to personal understanding, as opposed to corporate understanding, of the experience of the faith. Charles Healey notes Tyrrell's contribution to the area of personal spirituality.<sup>59</sup> Given that Catholic theologians today accept such insights of critical scholarship is, in fact, a fulfillment of the hope of the Modernist theologian George Tyrrell.<sup>60</sup> However, to my mind the contemporary Catholic theological climate immediately prior to and since the election of Pope Benedict XVI seems to be developing away from such critical theological understanding. A particular denominational

understanding, that is, the Roman, seems to be returning to take precedence over the ecumenical understanding of Vatican II. Unfortunately, such a move encourages a return to corporate understanding over personal understanding.

### The Existential Situation in Which I Find Myself

I find myself in an existential situation that I have not made or designed, but have inherited. I know that I cannot stop its continual evolution. Also, I know that I am personally involved in its transformation. As a Western Christian, I live within the anxiety and tension that accompany the end of conventional Christianity. But within this tension, marking the end of conventional Christianity, I see indications of a new beginning leading to a new future. These indications signal the beginning of the process of dehellenization thus enabling the conscious creation of the future of my belief.

Indeed, with this shift in my understanding, based on my experience, I now know that the true church is often to be found among those who have been excommunicated from the visible Church. Further, I acknowledge that those who are not members of the visible church may enjoy the benefits of her activity as a sacred and social institution. But, they are not direct sharers in her sacred activity. This does not mean to my mind, however, that those outside the visible limits of the Church are not members of the actual Church in some manner.

As a Christian, I have no objective philosophy of my own, but must rely on that of the community. My personal philosophical reflections, however, arise out of the world of my subjective inner experience of my community's objective philosophy. Similarly, I note that pagan religions have various philosophies to explain and interpret the experience of their adherents. As I noted above, Christian existential theology differs from Christian speculative theology in that existential theology takes human experience, as opposed to ideology, as its primary subject matter. Thus, given that as subject matter an ideological historical record is secondary, I consider the historical record as supplemental datum for reflection.



In other words, my theological reflection belongs to the category of personal experience, not the category of an objective philosophical statement.

In my existential encounter with God, I transcend the boundaries of my creaturely existence in such a way that I become more strikingly humanitarian. In other words, I understand myself holistically. Such holistic understanding is not reserved to mystics. Holistic understanding is at the center of Christian life. I have come to know God as I have come to know any other person, that is, through mutual self-giving. This required a philosophical and theological response from me as God was revealed to me. However, as a philosopher and as a theologian, I continue to respond to revelation differently. As a philosopher I respond to the existential probabilities offered through revelation, whereas, as a theologian I respond to revelation in the concrete phenomenon of existence. As with any personal relationship, the encounter with God defies objectivism, but not objectivity. I remind the reader that objectivism belongs to a non-dehellenized philosophy which preserves the past, whereas, objectivity belongs to a dehellenized philosophy that constitutes the present conscious creation of the future of belief. If I factor out the conscious creation of the future of my belief I am taking away that which is most strikingly humanitarian in me, that is, that I am greater than the sum of my individual parts.

### Theology and the Individual in Community

In the balance of this chapter I present my thoughts on the secondary role of the *ministerium verbi divini* as noted above. Even though God is the primary one to be revealed in word and sacrament, I have reflected upon the philosophical response to revelation given by me in creating my future of belief. For many believers, our experience is that we are estranged from the religion we inherited. To my mind, this estrangement is due to the end of conventional Christianity and the death of the traditional concept of God. The cultural conventions developed and designed in the past to protect me from anxiety are inadequate and unsuccessful

today. Often my experience leads me to conclude that God is not in his heaven and all is not well. In response to this state of affairs, new cultural safeguards are in the process of being created to meet my present needs. However, their success seems somewhat relative and somewhat limited. As an existential Christian philosopher and theologian I do not accept the Gospel message as merely a product of culture. Yet, the Gospel message is largely a product of the cultural milieu in which it was formed. Contemporary forms of cultural expression, conceptions, and customs, as well as Christianity's spirit and mentality are rooted in the world of Greco-Roman-Germanic civilization, which in turn has its roots in Hellenic culture.

Cultural influences notwithstanding, Catholic theology supplies an intellectual embodiment and expression of religious experience evoked by the preaching of Christ. The preaching of Christ remains substantially the same in my cultural experience even though Christ and I are separated by two thousand years of cultural differences. I understand that the Church's religious teaching must be in harmony with the mind of the age and that religion is an ever-varying expression of individual spiritual experience. Yet, as a religion, Christianity is a doctrinal system and a collective construct of a human community. This doctrinal system is a construction, not of poetical, but of theological, philosophical, ethical, scientific and historical beliefs and conceptions evoked by the preaching of Christ. My critical reflective appreciation of theological construction leads to personal self-discovery, that is, to the act of seeing for myself and to the act of doing for myself. My task as a theologian is to clarify the intersubjectivity, which exists between God as subject and me as subject. My theological self-discovery can have a subsequent effect on the moral and social life of the community. History shows that almost all of substantial philosophical and theological advancement has not been the work of officials, but rather of self-motivated individuals who have to some extent corrected and modified the system and often in opposition to officialdom.

The philosophy, most suitable for me to disclose what I know, is phenomenology. As a philosophy of consciousness,

phenomenology enables me to be conscious of my experience of the moment. Only with such conscious understanding can my Christian experience be meaningful. Phenomenology assists in discerning the meaning of me-as-subject created in God's image and likeness. As a philosophy of consciousness, phenomenology is proper for the Catholic tradition of theological interpretation. Natural theology, on the other hand, is somewhat outside the Catholic tradition of theological thinking. Traditional Catholic theologians generally view natural theology more as a philosophy than a theology. This, it seems, was the mind of Tyrrell. John Root writes: "Before the critical year of 1900, Tyrrell wrote several articles in which he analysed the thought of popular evolutionists, criticized both Naturalism and Natural Theology."<sup>61</sup> It could be argued that a special task of Catholic metaphysics, which does not belong to natural theology, but which is more properly phenomenological, is to show the grounds for the total consciousness of the world. Even so, Catholic theologians are not central to church's life. The *sensus fidelium* is. The Church could get along without a professional theological class but it could not get along without the *sensus fidelium*.

History reveals that controversial issues in religion introduced, by the new scientific knowledge in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries were, in the American Church at least, contested at the pastoral or practical level. To contest issues at the pastoral and practical level is characteristic of the North American temperament. However, the controversial issues in religion in France were contested at the level of theological argument, which is characteristic of the Continental temperament. These differing temperaments caused problems. One problem was that French thinkers could not understand the non-metaphysical or practical language of the North Americans. The French theologians tended to favour a theoretical and idealistic approach within their thinking. In England and the Continent, liberal Catholics attempted to integrate the new scientific knowledge within the teaching authority of the Church. The Modernists, it seems, attempted to reconcile the conflict between the Church and new scientific knowledge by altering the meaning of dogma and Church

authority. Unlike Christian philosophy, Christian theology involves the process of Divine self-revelation. For the French and Italian Modernists, a life of philosophical study was natural and often followed upon the life of contemplative prayer. Many Modernist theologians accepted that a saintly life replaced a theological understanding of doctrine and dogma. In Tyrrell's time there was a trend of professional theologians serving the doctrinal and dogmatic needs of the Church. That trend was, and remains, to serve the existential and practical needs of the individual in community.

The existential and practical needs of the believing community notwithstanding, theological construction has remained to a large degree a theoretical catechetical activity in the institutional Church. A theoretical catechetical activity is not primarily an activity of the *sensus fidelium*. Theoretical theological construction has deep roots going back to inter-testamental times. The need to construct a theology in the Gentile-Christian Church arose from the belief that the conception of God as the Father of Christ and, of Christ as the Son of God, must be demonstrated positively as a universal truth of reason, even if rooted in pagan Hellenist philosophy. However, contemporary theology, as a human discipline needs to take into account all revealed religious experience, not just Christian. This is so since existential interpretive issues are common to all not just Christians. All believers are caught up in the existential transition to a new expression and practice of their faith. Classically, theology is a labor of reason that has recognized and included revelation as gift within the Jewish, Islamic and Christian perspectives. Still, it must be remembered that theology is an afterthought in our understanding. Tradition notwithstanding, from an existential and ecumenical perspective it matters little that Christian theology has developed in Roman, Reformed and Protestant terms.

An existential theology, within contemporary Christian ecclesiology, presents a perspective that brings about an end to the antithesis between Rome and the Reformation. Thus, the new Christian outcome may be neither Roman nor Reformed. I find this an exciting possibility for theologians. Any new Christian outcome

would require an existential posture similar to that recognized by Maude Petre who was sympathetic to the so-called Modernist movement and Tyrell's views. Within such an existential posture, however, a Christianity understood without Christ becomes, not a new Christianity, but a new social ideal. Christianity understood with a mystical, but not historical, Christ is not a new Christianity but another religion. Further, Christianity understood with Christ as a moral ideal, not worthy of worship, is not new Christianity, but an adaptation of Christian teaching to other religious or ethical systems. It is clear that in Christian theology certain developments, such as the new cults, are not proper evolutionary developments at all. Rather they are substitutions for authentic Christianity which, I believe, has a better chance of survival in its classical form rather than in any new cultic form. Contemporary Christianity needs an existential theology in order to take on proper interpretive tasks in this age. Otherwise it has minimal reason for existence. In our contemporary context, with an emphasis on the needs of the individual, there is a danger that the Church, as a social community, may be understood as unnecessary for the spiritual life. This need not be the case. One must not forget that it is through the Church as community that new generations are introduced to the Christian faith. It must not be forgotten that one task of a theologian is the scientific analysis of public life and of communal experience with regard to religious issues.

Tertullian, the Carthaginian theologian, who died circa 230 spoke of the "natural man" simple, rude, uncultured, untaught and, not yet ruined by Greek education as being *anima naturaliter Christiana*. Tertullian invited his readers to return to their individual religious experience given that it is prior to any thought or theory. In this return they could explore the spiritual life in order to find the Christian route to God. Similarly, as a philosophical thinker, Socrates desired to help clarify the thinking of poets, politicians and whomever he met in market place, young and old. We know that Socrates did not initiate a system of philosophy. Rather, he took a rational approach to thinking. At this point, I note Kristina Stöckl's timely observation. "Modern man is shaped by the Enlightenment, not only insofar as he has become autonomous

in relation to preconceived foundations of a religious or traditional kind, but also to the extent that rationality itself has been recognized as not providing a foundation.”<sup>62</sup> Today, for many religious philosophers an existential issue is that God may have died in the mass culture of the nineteenth century. However, it is also an issue that God may return making use of new images and new symbols. Interpreting these new images and symbols is another task of the existential theologian.

As a theologian, when I articulate these ideas and expressed them in a language that makes sense in contemporary Western culture, I discover that theology cannot do without a religious philosophy. Thus, with the assistance of an existential religious philosophy the task of the theologian becomes a relative work. The work of the theologian today is conceived differently than in the days of the great theological systems, which dominated the Medieval universities. Developments in philosophy have always preceded developments in theology. Thus, there likely is no final philosophy or theology. To my mind, a primary task of the Christian theologian is to make known the great abiding truths of Christianity to a new generation. The principle merit and usefulness of theology is to satisfy the expectation of the Christian believer in this life. In attempting to satisfy the needs of the believer I make a distinction between the task of the theologian and the task of the spiritual counselor. The theologian answers needs arising within the revealed faith. The counselor answers needs arising within the human spirit. I am of the opinion, however, that an existential theology may address both within the context of a believing community.

Contemporary social psychologists first ask in their inquiry: what were the experiences that presented themselves to unscientific minds? Secondly, they ask: what do these experiences that presented themselves signify for science? Theologians first ask in their inquiry: what are the experiences that present themselves via revelation? Secondly, they ask: what do those experiences that present themselves signify for theology? In their thinking theologians may give a conscious account of their experience using psychology, yet never fully understand their experience as

psychologists. This is so since no two theologians construct their life-world identically but, each constructs it as a unique centre of interest and meaning. When I became aware of this unique construction of the human world, which is an illusion from the point of view of classical philosophy, that is, it is a psychological fiction I recognized it reflected a different, not contradictory, order to things. In this different order of things, constituted by personal interest and meaning, I recognized my individuality, not individualism, as subordinated to, yet dependent upon, the collective interest. As well, within my experience these questions presented themselves: has philosophy's role been taken over by psychology? Will psychology fail as a philosophy? These are questions, I believe, which have been raised in the experience of many other contemporary theologians.

History shows us that relatively few individuals have developed a profound sense of personal connectedness with other persons and their physical or external world. *Gemeinschaftsgefühl*, or the sense of universal interrelatedness interpreted as 'social interest,' has never been formally taught Catholic theological schools. Heinz and Rowena Ansbacher have made the annotation that this term, coined by Alfred Adler (1870—1937), despite alternative translations, is most adequately translated as social interest, denoting "the innate aptitude through which the individual becomes responsive to reality, which is primarily the social situation."<sup>63</sup> Much of our history, even though lived through democratic and religious institutions, has been preoccupied with the conquest and exploitation of the external world. This conquest and exploitation of the external world included people seen as objects. Power and might have been sought through covert and overt, manipulative and competitive movements, which are exploitive. I can't help wondering how different the world would be had our ancestors rejected Cartesian dualism, and opted for a holistic understanding. It often seems to me that my world has always been such that virtue is seldom rewarded. I often seem to lack the social interest of loving myself in ways that stimulate a charitable love for others. I seem to have philosophically victimized myself through an unworkable and false dichotomy

between the temporal and spiritual, and between rejecting this world and loving God. To reject the world is impossible. However, I have come to realize that my spiritual life, or loving God, is such that it is not in the power of others to take it from me.

The philosophical language of my inherited theological understanding is derived from intelligible concepts. By way of contrast, my phenomenological language inspired by revelation is derived from intuition. Theological construction is a perennial intellectual phenomenon proper to each person who is spiritually alive and active. It is to be remembered that theological constructs, like all theoretical constructs, are merely a roadmap for future speculations. At times, contemporary theologians think somewhat as poets. Such theologians translate their intuition of reality into concrete, heart moving images. However, following the mind of George Tyrrell, it is to the saints, and not the poetic theologians, that I attribute the growth of my Christian belief, which has been prefigured by the prophets. I do not understand "saints" to mean the canonized Saints of the Church who help me in my Christian belief. I agree with Maude Petre's observation that Tyrrell's

appeal was to the mystical apprehension of the saint rather than to the closely-reasoned arguments of the theologian; and if, through all the vicissitudes of his mental career, he preserved a certain allegiance to St. Thomas, it was because he believed that at bottom the teaching of the great doctor was far more spiritual than the later developments of scholasticism.<sup>64</sup>

As a matter of history canonized Saints have not always been the best moulders of the Catholic faith. Rather, the healthy growth of my faith depends upon the Christian Spirit which is present to various degrees in the lives of all the faithful. Thus, my spiritual progress reflects a deeper reading of myself and of reality. It is through transcending the illusion of an absolute being, by the judgments of my conscience that I progress spiritually. Thus, there is no progress in goodness, that is, the loving of what is right. There is progress only in ethics, the doing of what is right.

As I passed out of childhood, physically, mentally and morally, I became an adult agent. Further, as adult agent, I am also an agent



and co-creator, not merely a creature-agent. As co-creator I share in that divine agency which is consciously sympathetic and cooperative with the *intentio naturae* of which I am a part. Within the *intentio naturae* I distinguish between the “I” that lives as a separate human organism and the “I” that is a conscious subject and agent within the whole natural social process. Thus, not only am I capable of self-formation *ab intra*, but also am capable of a free self-adjustment to the universal good, *ab extra*. Theologically speaking, then, I am able to pass from the bondage of the law to the liberty of the Gospel. Many Christian mystics have felt the need to identify some invisible spiritual Church, some Communion of Saints, some mystical body of Christ, or organism of members manifesting the one and the same spirit in an endless variety of ways. This is not so in my case. But should this ever be the case that I become a part of such an invisible spiritual Church my separate self would necessarily communicate immediately with God.

In the reformulation of my theological constructions, it is within the general life of the community that I am to look for that revelation of God, in Christ. For many people today the traditional concept of a transcendental God is quite dead, but there is a definite movement to encounter an imminent God. Related to this is a strong movement to find a language and a construct amenable to both secular humanists and representatives of various religious groups. Humanitarianism, as opposed to humanism, provides a possibility for such a language and construction. The spiritual need for an object of devotion and a frame of reference for my spiritual experience suggest an innate urge proper to all humanity to worship something. I worship through faith since factual certainty is impossible. I suggest that humanitarianism is the most suitable term to describe the advanced state of maturity in which I feel myself as an integral part of humanity sharing past, present and future problems. From a humanitarian point of view, the real question for me is: What does Catholicity do for my moral and spiritual elevation? The question is not: How many millions of people does Catholicism number among its adherents? The collective mind, sentiment, custom, and morality of a community

or society, is an educational opportunity for my individual mind. My mind must be formed upon this communitarian standard, (the *sensus fidelium* in the case of the Church), which others must be able to recognize. In this way I am capable of critical reflection through which my community of faith may be improved and developed. To my mind, there is something in every individual, a sort of spiritual ambition and desire of true self-possession that makes one admire those who can suffer and endure life's problems for the sake of truth and the principle love, or which is the same thing, the reconstruction of Christian theology.

Note on Maude Petre.

Maude Dominica Mary Petre was born 4 Aug 1863. Maude was born into an English Roman Catholic family related to the Dukes of Norfolk, the leading English lay Roman Catholic family. Although educated “at home”, Maude started writing theological works whilst still in her teenage years, was a founder of Westminster Cathedral, worked as a nurse both in England and France during WWI, was a prominent member of the “Modernist” movement within the Roman Catholic faith and befriended the controversial Jesuit priest, Father George Tyrell, whom she provided with a home in his last years and became his literary executor as well as publishing a major biography of his life and work. She also spent some time at the Abbaye de Pontigny in France when she was involved with the International Centre for Students. There are two major studies of her life’s work, “Maude Petre’s Way of Faith” by Clyde Crews and “Unresting Transformation” by Ellen Leonard. Both these deal with her later life and her own particular philosophy rather than with her background and personal life. In her day, she was perceived as a controversial figure, undoubtedly because of her association with George Tyrrell and other major figures in the Modernist movement, although she herself would probably have considered herself basically orthodox in her faith. She set out to question and, having questioned, seems to have found herself at peace with the Church, although, in her modest request that her funeral should avoid controversy, seems to have recognised that the Church may not have been at peace with her! Her Will asks “to be buried in Storrington churchyard in the plot belonging to me between the grave of Arthur Bell and the wall and I leave all religious arrangements to my Trustees desiring only that there be no controversy with religious Authorities in the matter and that all religious ceremony be omitted if objection be raised by the said Authorities. I particularly desire that my funeral shall be conducted with as little expense as possible and that only a small inexpensive cross shall be erected on my grave.” For an unmarried woman of

her time Maude seems to have led a life of unprecedented energy and creativity. There is little doubt from her own writings that she was indeed in love with George Tyrrell, there is equally little doubt that this was never expressed in more than the Platonic Sense.<sup>65</sup>

Illustration 5

Maude Petre



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